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DOCTOR BASILIUS.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS,

AUTHOR OF "MONTE CRISTO," "TWENTY YEARS AFTER," ETC. ETC.

A New Edition.

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DOCTOR BASILIUS.

CHAPTER I.

On a certain evening in the month of November 1847, one of those terrible hurricanes peculiar to the Indian Seas, and which generally ravage the island of Java at the period of the monsoons, burst over the city of Batavia with disastrous effect.

The wind, which during the earlier part of the day had been blowing a fresh breeze, increased, towards six o'clock in the evening, to a violent tempest; the sea rose, and the waves broke thunderingly against the pier, which forms the harbour. Were it not for the pier, Batavia would be merely an open roadstead.

No one who has not had an opportunity of witnessing a hurricane in the Indian Ocean can form any conception of its effects. It is a coalition of all the elements combined for the destruction of man and his works. The sea seems determined to engulf the land; the wind appears as if it were striving to sweep away the towns into the sea; the lightnings are unlike the lightnings of ordinary storms, but resemble vast sheets of flame.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening, when one of these storms burst in all its terrific violence over Batavia. The wind, which in our temperate climates is satisfied with blowing and whistling, in those eastern climes howls and rages with tempestuous fury, uprooting trees, bowing the masts of vessels which have delayed standing out to

sea, overthrowing the huts of the negroes, stripping the bamboo roofs from the storehouses, strewing the ground with their ruins, and playing with their stoutest timbers as an ordinary wind whisks about the pieces of straw it has caught up from the sheaves in a field.

The aspect of the roadstead was especially most terrifying. In convulsions of nature like the present it is the sea that has the effect of inspiring the greatest amount of real terror. The furious waves, rearing their crests aloft as high as the houses, burst in inconceivable violence upon the shore, and seemed like so many ravening monsters, with their mouths opened wide, as if ready to swallow up those who were hard at work endeavouring to remove the boats which had been moored to the shore, and the various other objects which had been abandoned to their own weight. The sheets of water which dashed over the pier as over a reef, reached the vessels which were lying at anchor behind the shelter it was supposed to afford, lifted them up to the level of the roofs of the houses, and, driving them against each other, crushed them together with a terrible noise. The rain fell in torrents.

We have already observed that it was nine o'clock in the evening when the hurricane burst in all its fury. It was the hour when the population of Batavia had returned to the upper town.

Batavia is composed of two towns, the one situated above the other; the one being that in which the inhabitants reside, the other where they transact business. There is a third, to which we need only indirectly refer, called the Campong of the Chinese.

The lower town, situated along the front of the port, in the midst of the marshes, surrounded by a forest of mangroves, which frequently bathe their roots in the sea, and which, in places where they lie further back, scarcely leave between them and the ocean more than a narrow strip of ground, not wider than the towing-path along the side of a canal or a river,—the lower town, we repeat, becomes so terribly unhealthy after sunset, when the

poisonous vapours and the putrid exhalations arise from the ground, which is formed entirely of decomposed vegetable and animal matter, that no one ventures to pass the night there. Consequently, between six and seven o'clock, just as darkness covers the face of the heavens with the rapidity peculiar to tropical climates, the inhabitants desert the factories, storehouses, shops, and wherever else, indeed, they have been engaged in transacting business during the day.

The government-house, the theatre, the public establishments, and the houses of the European residents are all built upon the mountain which commands the roadstead, and are sheltered by their elevated situation from the pestilential exhalations which arise from the coast. The Chinese quarter is unhealthy, and is situated upon the opposite side of the mountain.

The uproar was so terrible that, in spite of the perilous position of the storehouses, which every one expected would be found the next morning completely destroyed, as had previously happened in 1806, not a soul ventured to trust himself outside his own house.

Alone, despite the pouring rain, despite the raging wind, despite the thunder-peals which burst incessantly over the city, a man on foot descended the steep road which led from the upper to the lower town. This man would have appeared indifferent to the scene of desolation which raged around him, had he not been compelled, in order to avoid being hurled down or carried away by the tempest, to cling for support, at every step he took, to the various objects of resistance he met as he advanced.

The rain streamed off his clothes in torrents; the branches of trees struck his face; fragments of roofing were hurled down, threatening him with destruction as they fell; indifferent to everything around him, he seemed bent only upon finding his way by the glare of the lightning which appeared to join the heavens and the earth together by gigantic serpents of fire.

In this way he struggled on until he reached the roadstead, then leaving the pier on his left hand and turning

to the right, he proceeded along the whole length of the quay. At every step he took he was covered with the foam of the sea.

When he reached the extremity of the quay, he paused for a moment, and awaited until the lightning should again illumine the darkness. Suddenly the heavens opened, and vomited forth a blaze of flame which enabled him to recognize a narrow causeway almost lost to sight among puddles of brackish water. He followed the causeway, walked onwards for five minutes, and finally paused before a hut constructed of bamboos, built at a higher elevation than the storehouses of the lower town, and the approaches to which were blocked up by bales and packages of various bulk, protected from the weather by huge tarpaulins.

The man we speak of knocked loudly at the door of this hut. No answer, however, was returned to his summons. He endeavoured to force an entrance, but to no effect. This resistance seemed to surprise him, for in the various towns of the Indian Archipelago doors in the greater number of the houses are mere matters of form.

He picked up a piece of wood which the hurricane had carried there, a fragment of some roof torn from its rafters, and using it as he would a sledge hammer, struck so violently against the intractable door that the sound rose distinctly above the raging of the tempest.

A feeble light glimmered through the interstices of the bamboos on the first floor, and a woman's voice asked in Dutch, "*Wie gaat daar?*" (Who is there?)

"Open," replied the stranger, "open immediately."

"Who are you? and what do you want?"

"Open first of all; surely you must see and hear what a terrible night it is, and that it is scarcely weather to stand parleying at the door."

"I cannot open until I know what you want, for it is hardly likely that in this storm and in so dark a night people would walk the streets with any good intention."

"My intentions are not only perfectly innocent, but perfectly pure and holy," replied the stranger; "my wife

is ill, and not only have all the doctors in Batavia given her up, but all the surgeons on board the vessels in the harbour as well, and I am come to ask for a consultation with Doctor Basilius, of whose skill every one speaks so highly."

"If that is all you have come for, wait a minute," was the woman's answer.

In a few moments the person who had been speaking came down to the door, unfastened the wooden and iron bars which secured it, thus proving the especial care with which it had been barricaded, and having opened it half-way, held up the transparent horn lantern which she had in her hand, so as to allow the light to fall upon the stranger's face.

By the light of the lantern she observed that he was a man of about five-and-twenty years of age, of regular features, and of a gentle and interesting expression of face. Notwithstanding his Netherlandish origin, his head was covered with long black hair, which set off his pale, clear complexion to great advantage; his large eyes, of as deep and dark a blue as sapphires, although red from weary vigils and much weeping, were overcast with an expression of extreme dejection. He was dressed in the European fashion, his well-fitting clothes indicating long service; in spite of the horrible storm which was raging, he wore neither cape nor cloak; the scantiness of his clothing, however, only served to display with greater effect the elegance of his figure and bearing.

The appearance of so handsome a young man, in whom, moreover, she recognized a countryman of her own, was calculated to reassure the young person who had opened the door,—a pretty girl who had hardly attained eighteen summers, and who, in those islands of the eastern seas, still retained her national costume, her head-dress with its silver-gilt ornaments, and her brilliant-coloured petticoat. She lowered the lantern so as to show the stranger that there was a step to ascend, and said, as she lighted him, "Be quick, come in, and shut the door, for the rain seems bent upon following you into the very house." The young man obeyed.

While he was fastening the street-door, the young Frieslander opened the door of a room, into which she introduced the stranger; it was of an octagon shape, carpeted all over with matting covered with strange patterns, a room which in the United Provinces would have been called a parlour, but which at Java, without bearing any particular name, was destined to answer many purposes; for upon the table, which occupied the centre of the apartment, was placed a half-emptied bottle of arrack with some glasses, and several open account-books covered with writing; and lastly, not only upon the same table, but also in every corner of the room and upon every article of furniture, half-opened packages were lying about, allowing partially unrolled bales of silk goods, and crape shawls to be seen, together with open cases disclosing dark brown cakes of opium, whose bitter flavour the palate immediately detected,—ivory ornaments of exquisite taste, upon the workmanship of which a patience more than human must have been bestowed,—china of the most costly kind, and chests of tea exhaling a perfume which evaporates during the long voyage which that fragrant herb is obliged to undergo before it reaches France or England.

The young girl threw one of the packages upon the ground, and offered the stranger a bamboo chair, not, however, without a grimace of ill-humour, as she observed that the latter had covered with the mud from his shoes and with the water which streamed from his clothes the bright, clean matting with which the floor was carpeted.

The young man sat down, looking eagerly round him at the same time to see whether he should not discover the person he had come in quest of somewhere in the room.

"You wish to see the doctor?" asked the young girl.

"Not only do I wish to see him," answered the stranger, to whom the question was addressed, "but I even wish him to accompany me to my own house; my wife is in the most imminent danger; my wife, I say, the only being who loves me, and whom I love, in the

whole world. Gracious Heavens! when I think, that every minute I am losing she is one step nearer death. Oh! mademoiselle," said the young man, bursting into tears and stretching out his hands towards his young countrywoman, "for Heaven's sake, take me at once to your master."

"Ah! poor young gentleman," was the girl's reply, "what do you expect him to do?"

"I look for my wife's life at his hands, since people say he is the only one who can save her."

"You are not aware, perhaps, that since his misunderstanding with the police magistrate, Doctor Basilius refuses to put himself out in the slightest degree for any one, it don't matter whom. He receives his friends at his own house, gives them medical advice whenever they ask him for it, but beyond that he refuses to have anything to do with sick people or their complaints; nay, more than that, I do not think my master has been to the upper town once during the last two years."

"Oh! speak to him for me," cried the young man, "in the name of Heaven speak to him for me, mademoiselle, I implore you! If you only knew how fondly I love my poor Esther; in saving her it will not be merely one existence that he will have saved, it will be two human beings, two of the Lord's creatures, a brother and a sister of his own, who would owe their lives to him. During the last twenty-four hours," he continued, sobbing, "that she has been struggling against death, I hardly know how I have been able to live myself; every minute seems an age, and yet every minute brings me rapidly nearer and nearer to that moment when I must take leave of her for ever. Let me see the doctor, I beseech you; let me throw myself at his knees, and implore him, in the name of everything he holds most dear in this world, most sacred in the next, to save my wife, if indeed it be really possible to save her."

The young girl shook her head doubtingly, while she looked at the stranger with an air of tender interest.

"Ah! you don't know Doctor Basilius," she replied, lowering her voice.

"No," returned the young man; "I have hardly been a couple of months at Batavia, and during those two months Esther has not once left her bed, and I have remained constantly beside her."

"Who told you to apply to him?"

"The chemist of whom I buy the drugs I require. He has spoken to me of your master as a man of the very highest ability, as a man of the most extraordinary skill, as the only physician who can contend with the terrible disorder which is hurrying my wife to her grave."

"And," said the young girl, hesitatingly, "did not the chemist give you any particulars of Doctor Basilius's life? Did he not tell you what were his habits, his antecedents, his adventures? Did he not inform you of the rumours which public malevolence has spread about him?"

"No! he merely said to me: 'Go to that man, he is the only one who can save your wife.' And so I came."

"Yes: but did he not say in addition: 'Take your purse with you, young man, and, above all, take care that it is well filled, before you venture to present yourself at his house?"

"Alas! mademoiselle," replied the stranger, "it would have been a very useless recommendation. I am merely a poor clerk, my only means being derived from my own exertions, and, unfortunately, since I have been at Batavia, unwilling to abandon Esther to the care of strangers, I have been obliged to resign the situation for which I had undertaken a journey of 4,500 miles; so that, until I have found another place, I am and shall be absolutely without a means of livelihood."

"So that, in coming here——"

"I relied only upon the doctor's charity."

The young Dutch girl sighed, and then, as if speaking to herself, she murmured, "Poor young man!"

"Why do you say that?" asked the stranger, becoming

not only more and more uneasy, but more and more impatient.

"I mean that if you are not rich, I question, more than ever, whether the doctor will consent to attend your wife."

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed the stranger, in despair; "since my poor Esther is condemned to die, at least take my own life at the same time as hers."

"If you would *not* mind," said the young Dutch girl, twisting the corner of her silk apron to hide her nervousness.

"What? speak. Do you know any means, any chance? do not keep me waiting, you see I am burning with impatience."

"I have a few savings of my own, which my master knows nothing about; you are a countryman of mine, you are in distress, your sufferings make me unhappy, why I cannot tell; but I felt an interest in you from the very first word you spoke; it is so rare for a man to love his wife as you seem to love yours," she continued, as if to lessen the humiliation with which her offer might be regarded. "Well! will you accept my little savings; you can return them to me when your wife is better, or when you have found a situation."

The stranger was about to thank her for her offer, and had already held out his hand to press the young girl's hand within his own, when a violent blow upon a gong rang through the house. The young girl started, and, without pausing a moment to address a single syllable to her compatriot, hurriedly quitted the room by a side door.

The stranger buried his face in his hands; his strength was utterly exhausted, he fancied he perceived that the last great effort he had made would be useless, his courage abandoned him, and he wept bitterly, though noiselessly; even his sobs seemed stifled. His grief absorbed him so completely, that he did not observe that the pretty Dutch girl had returned, and was standing close beside him. She touched his shoulder with

her finger. He started, and looked up, and seeing the girl's smiling face, he remained motionless, with his lips parted, in anxious expectation, waiting for her to speak.

"Go home," she said, "Doctor Basilius will go and see your wife."

Passing suddenly from the depths of the most bitter distress to the most extravagant delight, the young man fell on his knees, and kissing his companion's white and dimpled hands, he exclaimed: "Thanks, thanks, my guardian angel, for I cannot doubt that it was the sacrifice of your savings that made the doctor consent."

"No, and I can hardly understand it myself; there was no occasion to address the slightest entreaty to him."

"Indeed?"

"When I entered his room, trembling with fear at being scolded,—for he has forbidden me ever to talk with any one who may happen to come, and Heaven knows if I have disobeyed his order,—he did not even raise his eyes from the Calcutta Gazette which he was reading, but merely said these words: 'Tell Eusebius Van den Beck that I will go and see his wife.'"

"He knows my name!" exclaimed the young man in astonishment.

"What does he not know?" said the girl, with a gesture of terror; "and yet I have never seen him leave the house once since I have been with him, and that will soon be two years."

"'Tis very singular," said Eusebius, as he arose; "but, at all events, the principal point is gained. But how grateful I ought to feel to you; for although your kind offer has been needless, I have not forgotten it. Be assured that, as soon as my poor Esther shall have recovered, if indeed she ever should recover, I will bring her to thank you."

"Is she Dutch, too?" inquired the young girl.

"From Haerlem like myself."

"And — is she pretty?" she asked, hesitatingly. Feminine curiosity could not hide itself even while it took refuge behind an appearance of sympathy.

"Nearly as pretty as you are," said Eusebius delightedly.

"Do not bring her here, it is for me to go and see her; but leave this place at once, and as quickly as you can, for the doctor is going out, and if he should find me here still, he would accuse me of chattering."

"But at least wait until I have given you my address."

"It is not necessary, the doctor will find it very easily; so go."

"Yet——"

"If he had wanted to know it, he would have asked for it; so go away,—pray go." And the pretty little Dutch girl pushed Eusebius Van den Beck out of the house, pressing his hand at the same time to correct any appearance of unfriendliness which this mode of expulsion might have had.

The young man attempted a gentle resistance; but at this moment a second sound of the gong, louder and more prolonged than the previous one, resounded through the house. The girl, using her utmost strength, pushed the door and with the door Eusebius Van den Beck, who was bent upon giving her his address, but who found himself in the street before he had succeeded in doing so.

Eusebius heard her immediately secure the door by means of the wooden and iron bars with a hurried eagerness, which proved that Doctor Basilius exercised in and over his household an authority which admitted neither of resistance nor control. He called to her, but to no purpose, for his summons remained unanswered.

He attempted once more to enter into conversation with her, but the light which he still perceived glimmering in the house, disappeared altogether.

"This is a cruel jest," he exclaimed, in greater despair than ever. "It was merely to get rid of me that this young girl told me Doctor Basilius would go and see my wife. How is it possible he can do so, since I have not given him my address? And more than that, the house is situated at the very extremity of the upper town, in

one of those nameless lanes which abut upon the Chinese quarter." And again he called out to the inmates of the house, mingling his summons with entreaties.

"Good Heaven!" he murmured, "can the many efforts I have made be altogether fruitless? This wretched doctor will never be able, in such a dark night as this, to find out where I live, and my poor Esther will be dead before the morning." And he renewed his cries again and again.

As the house still remained perfectly silent, he picked up the piece of wood which he had used so successfully the first time to awaken the attention of the inhabitants, and began again to smite the door with it with all his might; but all his efforts were fruitless. Not a sound was heard, no one came, the house seemed deserted, and hardly an echo even proceeded from the desperate blows which poor Eusebius Van den Beck showered upon the door.

CHAPTER II.

Seeing the resistance offered by the door, and the continued silence of the house, Eusebius thought he could not possibly do better than wait until Doctor Basilius came out for the purpose of going to his wife in accordance with his promise; in which case he would introduce himself to the doctor, and act as a guide. The tempest was as furious as ever; the roaring of the sea and the raging of the wind continued unabated, while the rain fell in such torrents that it seemed as if the clouds and the earth were united by a sheet of water.

Eusebius's grief so completely overwhelmed him, his mind was so far removed from what was passing, that he did not even think of taking shelter under the tarpaulin, but remained exposed to the full fury of the storm. Be-

sides, the violence and wildness of the elements seemed in harmony with his own frame of mind. He waited thus during a whole hour; and then, observing that the door still remained shut, that not a sound in the interior of the house indicated that the doctor was getting ready to fulfil his promise, he again knocked and kicked at the door, no longer merely with despair, but with sheer rage. But all his efforts were fruitless, the house was as dark and silent as ever.

It was only then that, discouraged and worn out, convinced too that the young Dutch girl had taken advantage of his credulity, and that Doctor Basilius had no idea of disturbing himself on his account, he sorrowfully followed the little paved foot-path which led to the quay, and by the steep ascent down which we have already seen him make his way, returned to the upper town.

Midway he paused to cast a last look upon the road along which he had just passed; but, as far as his eyes could penetrate the darkness and the deluging rain which poured in ceaseless torrents from the skies, the road was utterly deserted.

"Wretch!" he exclaimed, extending his arms as if to invoke the malediction of Heaven: "he has the health of one of his own fellow-creatures in his hands, and he keeps his hands closed, because we have no gold to give in exchange for a life." Then, gazing around him in every direction, he added:—"Poor Esther! is your last hour really come? can I not find one charitable heart to save you from the pitiless destiny of a death at twenty years of age? I will struggle on to the very last, and defend thy life till Heaven itself sees fit to wrest it from me."

And suddenly, as if he had made up his mind, plunging forward with a wild impulse, Eusebius, in a few moments, had traversed the remainder of the steep ascent, and had knocked at the door of one of the most celebrated physicians in Batavia. But there, too, the servants refused to allow him to approach their master, whose attention was, however, at last attracted by his cries, his

sobs, and entreaties. Eusebius explained the reason of his visit. "What is the matter with your wife?" was the physician's question.

"Hitherto her case has been treated as one of pulmonary consumption," replied Eusebius.

The physician shook his head, turned to a table, wrote a few lines upon a slip of paper, and held out the paper to the young man.

"Get your wife taken the first thing to-morrow morning to the hospital; this is an admission for her; ask them to give her a bed in the ward D, and I will attend to her myself. But I should be wrong if I were to conceal from you that this disease, which is almost invariably attended with fatal results in Europe, has not a single instance recorded of a recovery from its fatal effects in this country, although that quack Basilius pretends he can cure pulmonary patients in the last stage of consumption."

"Basilius, always Basilius," cried Eusebius, darting out of the room without even taking the paper which the physician offered him; "he *must* come, I must see him, even were I to threaten his life to force him to do so, even were I to set fire to his house to drive him out of it, and drag him by force to Esther's bedside."

Eusebius, exasperated by the proposal which had just been made to him to take his wife to the hospital, was on the point of turning back and putting his threat into execution, when he reflected that he had been away a very long time from his home, that Esther had been alone all the time, and that probably she had urgent need of his presence.

The idea that Esther was calling for him, that he was not there to answer her, and that she might possibly think that she was abandoned by the only being who was left to her in the whole world, almost broke his heart. Instead, therefore, of again making his way to the port, he hurried in the direction of the upper town. He followed for some distance the long walls which surround the gardens of the sumptuous residences of the wealthy

Dutch merchants, and then began to penetrate the close and muddy lanes inhabited by the Jews, who like the Chinese and Malays have their particular districts assigned to them.

At last he reached his own dwelling. It was a small cottage, or hut, originally constructed of bamboos, but which, as it had gradually fallen into dilapidation, had been repaired with pieces of matting and old sails. Nothing could be more miserable than the appearance of this habitation, which was only one story high.

A faint light glimmered through a piece of matting, which answered the double purpose of door and window. The light was that of the night-lamp, which he had left burning beside his sick wife's bed. Eusebius started as he perceived it. "Alas!" he thought, "faint as that light is, it has perhaps outlived my poor Esther."

His agony was so violent that he hesitated entering, but at last, as if collecting all his energies, he drew aside the matting, and hurrying into the room, ran to the common truckle bed whereon Esther was lying. She lay perfectly motionless in seeming slumber; her eyes were closed, her lips parted, her breathing hushed. "She sleeps," said Eusebius.

Suddenly, as another and more terrible thought passed like lightning through his brain, he was about to bend down his face to her lips to listen to her breathing, when a sound like suppressed laughter proceeding from one of the corners of the room, made him start. Eusebius turned round, and distinguished in the gloom of the apartment a man seated upon a bamboo stool. He had a pipe in his mouth, the bowl burning with a dull glare as he smoked.

"Eh! eh! eh!" said the stranger, "it seems you have been playing truant my young friend, for although the journey is a long one from the mangroves to this place, I have been waiting for you more than an hour."

"Who are you?" asked Eusebius, stupified.

"Doctor Basilius, of course!" was the answer.

Eusebius cast a look upon the stranger-guest whom he found established in his house. Doctor Basilius was a short, fat man, with a very prominent corporation; a circumstance which—on the supposition that the idea one has formed of Satan be that of a thin, slender, tall personage—removed, in spite of the rumours afloat about the mysterious doctor, all notion of anything satanic in his case.

It would have been difficult to pronounce decidedly upon his age, for it was just as probable that he might be five-and-thirty years of age and looked older, as that he was fifty and appeared younger. His face was a deep red-brick colour, not unfrequently the case with members of the white race who have been exposed for a long series of years to the sea air and to the burning rays of a tropical sun. His fat cheeks had acquired a considerable addition to their natural development, and his jaw-bones, which made the lower part of his face look larger than the upper part, gave him a common-place expression, redeemed only by the strange peculiarity of his look.

If, indeed, there was any affinity between Doctor Basilius and the Evil Spirit, it was to the doctor's eyes we should be obliged to have recourse to establish such a resemblance. Although buried in their orbits, and hidden by the projecting brows, Doctor Basilius's eyes were bright and piercing, and possessed a sharpness of glance in harmony with the peculiar shrewdness of the mouth,—the thin lips being turned up at the corners with a smile,—which offered a marked contrast to the rest of his Dutch exterior.

The front part of his head was perfectly bald, thus allowing a double protuberance to be remarked, situated precisely in that part of the frontal development where ancient mythology has placed the horns of satyrs, and the magic of the middle ages those of Satan. The absent hair was replaced by a red knitted cap, which could easily be pulled down over the ears whenever the doctor wished

to protect them from the cold or rain, but which he turned up, like a Chinese cap, whenever he thought there was no risk in exposing his ears to the action of the air.

His dress bore no resemblance whatever to the ordinary attire of his professional brethren; for since the general adoption of the European costume, medical men, even in Batavia, wear the traditional uniform of the black coat, black trousers, white waistcoat, and white cravat. There was nothing in the doctor's present appearance, however, which bore any approach to this professional standard. He had drawn over his common striped drill trousers, as a protection against the rain, a pair of leggings of that peculiar yellow tarpauling worn by sailors at sea; a blue cloth coat, very thick and warm, and a red silk handkerchief, fastened round his neck by an enormous pin in the shape of an anchor, completed a style of attire which may have been peculiarly adapted to the shores of the Zuyder Zee, but which seemed marvellously ill-suited to Java.

We have already observed that the doctor had established himself upon a bamboo stool; and, to make the stool answer the purpose of an armchair, he had selected one of the corners of the room, against which he was reclining very comfortably. We have also observed, that to while away the time he was smoking a small silver-gilt pipe, with a long slender stem, the bowl, no larger than a common thimble, being filled with some strongly-spiced preparation.

"How did you come here, sir?" asked Eusebius Van der Beck.

"Through the air, on a broomstick," replied the doctor, with a short, dry, sharp laugh, which was peculiar to him, and was not very dissimilar in sound to the chirp of a grasshopper; "you can easily understand that, being driven along by the wind which is now blowing, I did not require very long to get over the distance."

"At all events, you are here, doctor," said Eusebius, "and my gratitude need not criticise very narrowly your means of locomotion; thank you, thank you, dear doctor,—

thank you." And he endeavoured to take hold of the doctor's hand, to press it gratefully in his own.

"Take care," said the doctor, drawing it back hastily, "you will scratch yourself with my claws."

"What do you mean?" asked Eusebius.

"Is it possible you are the only one in this good city of Batavia who can be ignorant that Satan and I are on the most intimate terms; that the Prince of Darkness comes every morning to partake of my *café à la crême*, and every evening of my *café noir;* and that it is only owing to his counsels that I have had the advantage, on three or four occasions similar to the present, of appearing a little less like a consummate ass than my professional brethren."

"Why, I certainly have heard such things mentioned, but how is it possible such absurdities can meet with any belief in the present age?"

"Eh! eh! eh! we must not be quite sure about anything; besides, gratitude is a burden very difficult to bear for any lengthened period, and there are a good number of persons living who would be very delighted to get rid of it, at the expense of any piece of folly, greater even than gratitude itself."

"Do not suppose for a moment, doctor, that *I* belong to that class; for be assured I shall remember, during my whole life, not only the obligation, but the readiness and the disinterestedness with which you have come to my assistance."

"Eh! eh! eh!" cried the doctor, suddenly taken with such a violent fit of laughter that it turned into a fit of coughing; "this young man amuses me, he amuses me prodigiously; go on, my young friend,—nothing pleases me more than to see the heart overflowing with cascades of words; they demonstrate the fine nature of the person who uses them, and I positively adore a fine nature. Well, what were we going to say?"

"That, in exchange for the service you are about to render me, doctor, in restoring my wife to health, you can dispose of me in any way you may please; and what-

ever price you may choose to place upon my gratitude, I shall always be ready to lay down my life for you, since you will have given me more than life itself in restoring me that of the woman whom I love more than myself."

"Mein Gott! but you are proposing a bargain to me, young man; you seem ready enough to accept literally the description which the good-natured folks here have been considerate enough to draw of my person; gratitude is hurrying you a little too far; gratitude, *peste!* be on your guard against it, I recommend you."

"Doctor, doctor," said poor Eusebius, in an expostulatory tone, and so mortified at the jeering manner with which Basilius received his thanks, that he felt the tears rush to his eyes, "you are laughing at me, doctor."

"I should take very good care to avoid doing anything of the kind," said the doctor, bursting into a loud laugh; when did I ever suspect anything or anybody? I believe all the promises I hear made, people are always sincere when they make them; but when it becomes a question of keeping them, it is quite another matter, and the most honest people are those who perform them literally even while they regret ever having made them."

"I swear to you, doctor, that——"

"I believe you, my young friend, exactly as I believe other men; that is to say, you are perfectly sincere in promising, as you will be perfectly sincere in forgetting."

"I give you my word, doctor——"

"Stay," said the doctor, interrupting Eusebius; "there is just opposite to you, to the right of that chest which you use as a chest-of-drawers, a broken piece of looking-glass?"

"Well?"

"Hold it before your face."

"It is done, doctor."

"What do you see?"

"My face."

"Well, then, it is just as sensible to swear that twenty years hence you will think of the oath you are ready enough to take at this very moment, as to hope that twenty

years hence the face which this mirror will then reflect will be the same as it is now. But it don't matter in the slightest degree ; go on, my young friend, I feel ten times greater pleasure in hearing men speak of their gratitude than I should have in testing the effects of it. Go on, go on ; don't check yourself on my account."

"At all events, doctor," said the unhappy Eusebius, who was determined to persuade his singular companion that he was not ungrateful, like other men, "I hope the pleasure has been reserved for me to show you that you have formed too bad an opinion of the human race. But, as we have lost a good deal of time, would you like me to awaken my poor wife?"

"What for?"

"In order that you may give her what is necessary for her state."

"Capital," said the doctor, with a loud laugh. "Her state, as you call it, does not require any immediate attention ; she is now sleeping as she has never yet slept. Listen, you can hardly hear her breathe."

"It is so," said the young man, anxiously advancing a step towards the bed. But the doctor checked him by catching hold of the tail of his coat.

"Let her sleep," said the latter, "for it is in sleep that nature regains her strength. Who can assure us that death itself, which people hold in so much dread, is not merely a long sleep, in which we are undergoing a preparation for a fresh existence? Upon my word, that sounds like the enunciation of a new creed. Eh! eh! eh! it is not so absurd after all, perhaps."

"Would you wish me, doctor, so as not to lose any more time, to give you some particulars of Esther's illness,—as to the symptoms, for instance, which made their appearance in the earlier stage of it?"

"In the first place, my young friend, you must know that we are not losing our time ; we are philosophizing ; which is, on the contrary, the very best use a man can make of the hours of his life. And, as for your explanation of your wife's malady, and the symptoms which ac-

companied its earliest stage, I know all that as well as you do. Just as there are certain laws for birth, so there are for death : it follows, therefore, that all knowledge is easy, as soon as a man has learned to read in that great book written for the blind, and which is called Nature. Leave your wife, therefore, to sleep in peace, and let us talk of other matters."

Eusebius sighed ; but, imagining that he ought to yield to the doctor's caprices, he said, "What would be the most agreeable subject to converse upon, doctor?"

"Anything you please, my young friend. It matters very little to me whether I drink arrack, or our own excellent Schiedam, or Constantia, or the juice of the palm. I have talked for hours together with a venerable Brahmin of Juggernaut, and the next day, after having the previous evening exhausted the mysteries of the six-and-thirty incarnations of Brahma, I did not feel myself in any degree the less capable of taking an interest in the conversation of the Lascars of the junk on board of which we were sailing down the sacred stream."

"Very well, then, doctor," said the young man, endeavouring, in spite of the instinctive and increasing oppression of his heart, to assume a confident and cheerful air, "tell me what was the reason that induced you to take so sudden and so charitable an interest in me ; you who——" Eusebius perceived that he had entered upon a somewhat difficult subject, and hesitated to complete his phrase.

"I who—well, finish," said the doctor. Then, observing that Eusebius continued silent, he added, "I who sell the little knowledge I have, or which others think I have, for its weight in gold, you were going to say, I suppose?—that is what you mean ; at least, that is what you were thinking."

"Oh ! doctor."

"Don't fancy I am offended : the priest lives by the altar, and doctors live by death. Do you suppose that if I chose to give myself the trouble, I could not convince you, in the clearest and most satisfactory manner, that

not doctors only, but every man, whatever his occupation may be, gets fat upon his neighbour's misfortunes? Only that the injury which he does to one, another returns to him. It is benefit or personal advantage alone that a man does not sell. However, that is a matter which would lead us too far, and so we will return to our former question. There is one thing I do prefer to gold; but that may possibly be because I have more gold than I know what to do with." Eusebius looked at the doctor in astonishment. "Yes, that is another proof of the good opinion which men have of human nature. You are surprised that I acknowledge myself to be rich. People very rarely speak of such matters, for two reasons: the first, because a rich man is always afraid he is going to be robbed; but that is not the principal reason. He fears still more—and that is the second reason, which I ought to have placed before the former—he fears still more that people may trace back the sources of his wealth. Now these sources, my young friend, consist, for the most part, of corruption, usury, fraud, theft, assassination even. You can easily understand the discredit which would attach to many of our millionaires, if we traced back the *sources* of *their* wealth. Travellers, in their searches after the source of the Nile, have, on their arrival at the fourth degree of latitude, found nothing but putrid marshes, whose exhalations are of the deadliest kind. No inconsiderable proportion of the great fortunes of the earth issue from marshes often more poisonous than those of the Nile. Do not approach them too closely, or you will run the risk of inhaling more carbonic acid gas than azote or oxygen. With me it is a very different thing; and you may think me nothing better than an impudent scoundrel, because I acknowledge, without any attempt at concealment, whence my riches have been derived. Like Doctor Faust, I have handed myself over to Satan; Satan has enabled me to drink deeply of the cup of knowledge. I contend against higher and better influences. I cure, but I take care to make my terms before the cure is

effected; otherwise, if I waited until afterwards, my trousers would be as shabby and my coat as out of the elbows as your own."

"That is precisely the reason, doctor, which made me put the question to you I did, and which you have not yet answered."

"Well, then, I will answer it now, my young friend; there is one thing I prefer to gold, and that is my own fancy. The interest which you almost reproached me for having manifested towards you, is mere fancy, nothing more; and that is the reason why I treat your expressions of gratitude with so much indifference. Do you ever take opium, Master Van den Beck?"

"No, doctor."

"Then you are wrong; opium is an excellent thing. They *do* say that opium makes people thin; look at my figure; they *do* say that the eyes become dim from its use, look at *mine*." As the doctor pronounced these words he struck his hand upon his well developed corporation, with a sound which would not have done any discredit to the big drum in a military band, while his eyes flashed like lightning.

"They *do* say it shortens life," continued the doctor; "error! falsehood! calumny! it doubles it, since it procures us a second life in our sleep."

"Doctor," observed Eusebius, anxiously, "speaking of sleep, do you not think that there is something alarming in my wife's sleep continuing so long."

"Are you aware that all Oriental nations, Turks, Arabs, even the Chinese, all of whom we regard as the most debauched races in creation, as the very counterfeits of humanity, comprehend the value of existence in a manner, logically speaking, very different to that in which the Western nations do? What is our own dull or noisy intoxication, that intoxication which wine or beer produces, that material imbibition which degrades man below the brute, to be compared to that inhalation of a perfumed vapour—the tendency of which being always to raise itself higher and higher, ascends to the

brain instead of descending into the stomach—compared with that delicious torpor which frees our spirit from its earthly envelop and allows it to wander from paradise to paradise."

"Doctor, dear doctor, talk about my Esther, I entreat you."

"Be it so, then, since you absolutely require it," said Doctor Basilius, without attempting to conceal his annoyance.

"I must tell you, doctor, that even before she left Haarlem, she was suffering from a cough which gave me great uneasiness, on account of its obstinate nature."

"Ah! you come from Haarlem, do you?" said Doctor Basilius, without appearing to notice Eusebius's impatience at the interruption; "a charming little city, upon my word."

"Charming, doctor; only, allow me to remark——"

"If, however," continued the doctor, "you really come from Haarlem, I suppose you know Rembrandt's celebrated 'Night-Round,' which is now in Van Damm's gallery."

"Yes, doctor," replied Eusebius; "but I wished to tell you——"

"And I wish to tell you, my dear fellow, that what *I* am going to say is far more interesting than what *you* were going to say. I refer to a *chef-d'œuvre* of a man who will live as long as the canvas on which it is drawn and the colours in which it has been painted will endure; in other words, for several ages to come; while man, that *chef-d'œuvre* of creation, composed of flesh and bones, lives thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, and then rots away. 'Pah!' as Hamlet said."

"I give you my word, doctor," said Eusebius, shuddering, in spite of himself, "that you almost terrify me out of my life."

"Well," continued Basilius, as if he had not heard Eusebius's last remark, "that famous picture is only a copy, and if you positively wish to become acquainted with the original, you will have to pay me a visit. You

not only shall see the 'Night-Round,' but the whole of my gallery of pictures, for you must know that I possess a gallery in the wretched cabin in which I live, on the quay in this good city of Batavia; for it so happens, as I was going to tell you just now, that thanks to my wealth, I have been enabled to surround myself, not only with all the material enjoyments of the East, but also with the intellectual pleasures of the West, and you will find everything you can wish for at my house, *chef-d'œuvres* of art and nature, Rembrandts, Titians, and Rubens, the finest wines of Hungary, France, and Spain,—in fact, the best specimens of the three races which people the earth, the white race, the black race, and the yellow race."

"Good Heavens!" murmured the young man to himself, pacing up and down the room full of agitation, and casting a look at his wife, who still preserved the same motionless and silent attitude; "is it possible that this unmerciful chatterer can be the same Doctor Basilius who, people say, has effected such wonderful cures."

Then, pausing before him like a man who has made up his mind, he said, "Monsieur, first of all examine my wife, I beg, and then—oh! I will talk to you as long as you please."

"Very good," replied the doctor; "but a few words more before I do so."

"Speak on."

"Your name is Eusebius Van den Beck?"

"Yes."

"You come from Haarlem?"

"I told you so just now."

"Son of Jacobus Van den Beck?"

"Son of Jacobus Van den Beck."

"Husband of Esther Mavius, who was the daughter of William Mavius, notary, and of Jane Catherine Mavius, his wife?"

"Nothing could be more exact; you speak as if you were reading from an extract of the register of marriages."

"Sister," continued the doctor, "of a certain Basil

Mortier, who embarked at twenty years of age, quitted Haarlem, and never returned there?"

"Never, monsieur. Did you happen to know that uncle whom my wife can hardly remember?"

"I have heard him spoken of; nay, I even had a personal acquaintance with him. He was a smuggler, a pirate, a corsair; but I don't know where he can have gone to get himself hanged at last."

"Is it possible?"

"Oh! don't waste your pity on him, he was a sad scoundrel."

"He was my poor Esther's uncle, doctor; and forgive me if I beg you not to speak ill in my presence of so near a connection of my wife. We Dutch of the old school are brought up with a respect for family relationships."

"You're a very singular young man, upon my word; but we won't speak of your uncle if you don't wish it."

"No, doctor; but in Heaven's name speak of his niece."

"It is very strange," observed Basilius, as if speaking to himself, but yet sufficiently loud for Eusebius to hear him, "it is very strange how obstinate men are to meet misfortune."

"I was about telling you," resumed Eusebius, without paying attention to this kind of aside of the doctor. But the latter interrupted him impatiently——

"Yes, yes, I know," he said; "you were telling me that before you left Haarlem your wife was then suffering from a cough, which caused you great uneasiness." And then, as Eusebius was about to continue, he said, "Let me tell you the rest, and you will see that it was useless to bother me about a matter which I know better than you do."

"Better than I do!" exclaimed Eusebius in astonishment.

"You shall see. Interrupt me if I make a mistake; but, confound it, don't interrupt me if I'm all right."

"I am listening," replied Eusebius, whose astonishment increased

"Well, then, the first few days of the voyage fatigued her exceedingly, she was obliged to remain in bed, her cough continued, and the expectoration became excessive."

"Precisely so, doctor."

"In that case let me go on. On the fifth day after your departure, your wife was seized with a violent spitting of blood, in other words, with hemoptysis. This spitting of blood was checked by the agency of certain medicaments, but your wife still continued to complain of violent pains in her chest. The intensity of the cough had diminished, but her organs of digestion refused to act any longer. This state lasted during four or five days, at the end of which your wife, feeling herself better, imagined she was quite cured. A week afterwards, the weather being fine and the sea calm, she was strong enough to go upon deck, and to walk about leaning upon your arm. The pains in the chest and the pains in the stomach had ceased; the appetite returned, and with it your wife recovered a portion of her strength and all her youth and cheerfulness. When you landed at Batavia, after a voyage of five months, neither you nor your wife thought any more about pulmonary phthisis; it would seem as if there had never been such a disorder upon the face of the earth, and that it had remained in the hands of Providence, from whom we receive all disorders, as hope remained in the box of Pandora."

"It is true, doctor," exclaimed Eusebius, more terrified at the doctor's knowledge of the past than at the kind of blasphemy which had passed his lips, and which he had accompanied by the same diabolical laugh we have already referred to.

"Wait for the conclusion before you applaud; like all great *artistes*, I reserve my grandest effect for the *dénouement*. Two days after your disembarkation, just as you had paid a visit to the merchant to whom you had been recommended, and in whose house of business you were to enter on the following Monday, your wife complained to you of pains in her loins and of weariness in her limbs.

The cough made its appearance again the very next evening, and the expectoration on the following day. The tubercles were carrying out their work of destruction, hollowing out their caverns under the influence of this warm, moist temperature; on the application of the stethoscope it was discovered that the right lung was nearly, if not entirely, gone, and that the left lung was attacked. Your wife was in what is termed a galloping consumption; respiration, which gradually became more and more difficult, was accompanied by a wheezing sound; the circulation grew more hurried and unequal; the pulse increased to from 95 to 100 pulsations a minute, and during the night from 110 to 115; in the morning, the bosom, the face, and the hands were covered with a cold, clammy perspiration, her strength wasted away, the intellect became clouded, extreme sensibility deadened the very affections; the affections themselves, that is to say, that manifestation of life which regards itself as bound to survive life itself, seemed to perish, to fade away; within the space of a few days, age appeared to have taken complete possession of that woman, who formerly had been so smiling, so loving, so affectionate; she had grown indifferent to everything, even to the marks of your affection, utterly regardless of everything, even of death itself. Now, tell me, is not that precisely what took place?"

"Yes, doctor, in every particular; but how could you possibly have known——"

"Eh! eh! eh!" said the doctor; "I cannot help laughing when I see those pretty, sentimental romances, published in Europe, giving a description of those interesting, consumptive patients, like the frightful pastels which the French call painting, those charming invalids inhaling the air of Nice, or drinking the Pyrenean waters, with their little quilted caps and their rose-coloured satin wrappers, coughing gracefully, and fainting away in the most sentimental manner. Come, tell me, Master Van den Beck, has your Esther lately borne any

resemblance to those pretty little consumptive patients I have been speaking of?"

"Alas! no, doctor; but as, notwithstanding the change which her disease has worked in her, I do not love her the less; help her, cure her, save her."

"My dear friend, there is nothing I should like better," said the doctor with his accustomed laugh, "but it is rather late."

"What do you mean by rather late!" exclaimed Eusebius, looking at him with eyes perfectly aghast with terror; "rather late, do you say?"

"Certainly; your wife breathed her last at half-past eight this evening, at the very moment you were knocking at the door of my house."

Eusebius uttered a terrible cry, and threw himself upon the bed. Esther's body was already cold and stiff, with the rigidity which science designates the rigidity of a corpse. "It cannot be, it cannot be!" groaned the wretched young man, rolling in sheer agony on the bed, snatching up his wife in his arms and pressing his lips to her lips, which were chilled in death. "For Heaven's sake, doctor, come to my assistance, for she is not dead, she cannot have died without having bid me farewell. And I, who was quietly listening to everything this man was saying——Esther, Esther! oh!—doctor, I implore you—when I left her she was calm and smiling; she told me that she had never felt so well since the commencement of her illness."

"That is always the case, my poor boy," said the doctor, "life owes a smile to those of whom it is about to take its final leave."

CHAPTER III.

When Eusebius became convinced that his wife was really dead, he fell into a state of the most terrible despair, uttering cries which would have affected the most indifferent person, tearing his hair, and wildly tossing his arms towards heaven. The doctor still seated on the same stool, went on filling and smoking his pipe with the greatest apathy. He did not attempt to utter a word, nor in any way to check the expression of his passionate distress.

By degrees it became more moderate, or rather died out, as too bright a flame does when it has consumed its supply. Eusebius, after a nervous crisis more violent than any that had preceded it, felt his eyes, which had hitherto been dry and burning, become suffused with tears; he wept, and his overburdened heart found immediate relief. He sat down on the side of the bed, carefully removed the long tresses which, in the wild tumult of his grief, had covered his dead wife's face, tenderly arranged them, and taking hold of her hand, said to the doctor; "Ah! monsieur, you can form no idea what I have lost in losing her. We had been brought up together, lived next door to each other; I shared in all her innocent amusements, as she has since participated in all my miseries. She was lovely even at ten years of age, when she used to call me her little husband: her hair grew in long curls, which they could never succeed in imprisoning in her little caps, and her eyes were of such a deep blue, that the forget-me-nots, which we used to gather on the banks of the streams, and which I used to wreath into crowns for her head, seemed almost pale in comparison. Oh! who would have thought that I should so soon have seen her pale, cold, dead. Oh! Heaven! my poor Esther," cried Eusebius, again bursting into tears.

"It is the common lot, my boy," said the doctor, voluptuously inhaling the vapour of the opium; "we only flourish to fade away, we only grow up to be cut down, happy even when the scythe of death cuts us off in our youth and beauty, when we are perfuming the air around us, and not when the autumnal wind has dried us standing, when the winter has covered us with snow. Even I, such as you see me now, was once a pretty child, as fair and pretty as any other. Eh! eh! eh! no one would suspect such a thing, to look at me now, would they?" And he burst into a loud, shrill laugh, which always produced a strange effect, but was stranger still when it rung forth at the bedside of a dead person. Eusebius started, rose to his feet, but almost immediately fell back again on his seat, as if his limbs had refused to support him.

"What a frightful destiny the future has reserved for me!" he exclaimed, as if overwhelmed with despair.

"That is all very well," said the doctor; "deplore your own lot if you like, my good friend; give as free a course as you please in your grief to human egotism; confess that it is not on her account but on your own, that you regret your wife's death, and you will be speaking the truth."

"Egotism, sir," exclaimed Eusebius; "you call what I feel egotism! This egotism, if it be such, will kill me in my turn; for I feel I shall never survive her whom I have so fondly loved."

"So much the better for you, my young friend; so much the better for you," said the doctor; "and if you keep your word, I shall pity you as little as I pity the young creature who has just taken her leave of this life without having known anything but its beauties, who has gone away ignorant of the misery, the treachery, the deception which is reserved for all here below, and who has fallen asleep, still able to dream—if, indeed, people do dream up yonder."

Eusebius Van den Beck hid his face in his hands, without offering a word in reply, while the sound of his

sobs was occasionally heard, interrupted or accompanied by the doctor's short, dry laugh.

Suddenly Eusebius started up; that laugh seemed to go through his very heart, and it was impossible for him to bear it any longer. "Doctor Basilius," he said, "I am distressed to have to give a lesson to a man of your age and of your profession; but the truth is, that during the whole time you have been here you have not ceased one single moment to show an utter want of respect for my distress."

"At my age, my young friend," replied the doctor quietly, "people don't change their habits, and one of my habits is to respect only what I understand."

"Very good, I shall act in the same way, sir," said Eusebius, with his eyes glaring on the doctor, and with a loud hoarse voice, "and I shall not lose my time in trying to discover the meaning of your singular scepticism. Will you be good enough to leave me, I have only this room to pray in, and your presence, which seems to dry up my tears, is odious to me; more than odious, indeed, for it is insupportable."

The doctor coldly drew out a large watch, which was fastened round his neck by a heavy silver chain, and quietly opened the double case. "Your gratitude, which you talked so much about just now, and which I had earned, it appears, by having gratuitously disturbed myself for a person with whom I had not the slightest acquaintance, has lasted precisely one hour and forty-seven minutes. Eh! eh! eh! that is a good while, young man, and I have met with some people whose gratitude has not lasted so long as that." And picking up his oilskin hat, which he had thrown into a corner of the room, and pulling up his tarpauling leggings, the doctor made towards the door.

The reply seemed a hard one to Eusebius; but, as it was not altogether deficient in justness, he made a movement as if to stop him. The doctor had already reached the threshold of the door, but, observing the movement of Eusebius, he paused.

"Just now," he said, "I heard you swear that you would never survive your wife. When it is no longer a question of gratitude, there is no reason to disbelieve the word of an honourable man, and you seem to be one. Are you really determined, since your wife is dead, to die with her?"

"Yes," replied Eusebius, with a gloomy air.

"In that case I will show you that my friendship for you, however inexplicable it may seem, is no mere idle talk. Take this poniard, it is a Malay creese. It is poisoned with the famous American poison of which you have very probably heard, called *curare;* a mere scratch upon any part of the body, provided it draws blood, is sufficient to produce a sudden and painless death. Take this dagger, Eusebius Van den Beck, take it; and once more I look for no return of gratitude."

"Thank you," said Eusebius, seizing hold of the dagger by the blade.

"Take care what you are about, my good fellow, for you might prick or cut yourself by mistake, and you would never console yourself for that." And, bursting into an infernal peal of laughter, he added,—"Good-bye until I see you again, my young friend, good-bye." And he left the room.

"Adieu!" said Eusebius.

When the young man was left alone, he threw himself on his knees before the corpse, and attempted to pray; but his memory no longer supplied him with a single formula of the prayers of his childhood, his lips refused to stammer out the name of Heaven, the Virgin, or the Saints. It seemed as if the presence of the mysterious doctor had driven from the house all those religious feelings which are a man's consolation in his extremest need.

He observed in a vase the flowers which Esther had on the previous evening asked him to procure her, and which he had himself gathered for her. He made them into a wreath and a bouquet, and placed the wreath upon her head, the bouquet in her hands. He then took her in his

arms, moved her in the bed so as to make room for himself by her side, and placed himself beside her. For some time he held the corpse closely in his embrace, and covered her lips and eyes with his kisses. Then, with his left arm still round his wife's neck, in such a way as to hold her close against his heart, he took the creese, which he had placed by the bedside, in his right hand, and directed the point towards his breast.

At this moment he perceived at the foot of the bed Doctor Basilius, who had entered the room unperceived and unnoticed by Eusebius, and who was looking at him jeeringly. Eusebius Van den Beck started up as if he had received a galvanic shock, and threw himself upon the doctor with the rapidity of lightning. The latter awaited him with a firm foot, and without in any way exhibiting the slightest indication of fear; his laugh, however, had acquired the tremulousness of the hyena's laugh. But, no sooner did he see the young man within reach of his grasp, than he seized hold of the wrist in which he was brandishing the poisoned dagger, and wrenched it so violently that the creese escaped from the fingers of Eusebius, who uttered a loud groan of pain.

Then, without giving him time to recover himself, the doctor seized him round the waist, and with the skill and strength of a professional wrestler, raised him bodily from the ground, made him describe a circle in the air, and, without even letting him touch the ground, hurled him, stunned and stupefied, to the other end of the apartment; he knelt down upon his chest, grasped both his wrists with his left hand, so as to render all resistance impossible, and with his right hand picking up the creese, which had fallen a very short distance from the spot where he was, he, in his turn, placed the weapon against the young man's chest.

"Eh! eh! eh!" laughed the doctor, jeeringly; "so we were going to turn the dagger against the giver, were we? that's hardly civil, Master Eusebius."

"I have told you, sir," said Eusebius, making a final but useless effort to disengage himself, "that your presence is odious to me."

"What ingratitude!" returned the doctor; "I who love you as if you were my own flesh and blood."

"If you do love me, why do you turn my grief into jest? if you do love me, why did you give me this dagger and then prevent me from using it?"

"Prevent you from using it? I have not made the slightest attempt to prevent your using the dagger if you choose; I only wanted to see how you were going to use it."

"You had gone away; I thought I had got quit of you; why did you return?"

"To save you, perhaps; perhaps, also, merely to be present at the termination of the little comedy you had promised me."

"Very well, then, finish this tragedy at once; you have the dagger, and life itself will be doubly insupportable if I am to owe it to you. Kill me! kill me! kill me! I say," persisted Eusebius, making a movement as if to meet the thrust of the poniard; "it is the only service you can render me; the only one I should care to receive at your hands."

"So, so! insults, downright insults, without any attempt at concealment or disguise. You improve, Eusebius Van den Beck; and I like it better than your sentimentalities. Come, come, are we still determined to follow our pretty Esther? and is life really hateful to us when she is no longer here to charm it?"

"End this, ruffian!" said Eusebius, making a superhuman effort to free himself.

"Patience, my young friend, patience; that is the secret of life, the spring and source of every success in it." Then, placing the poniard between his teeth, he unfastened Eusebius's clothes, so as to bare his chest, with as much coolness as if it were a mere question of a simple surgical operation. Then, again menacing Eusebius with the point of the dagger, he said, "Are you quite sure of following her you love up yonder?"

"What do you mean?"

"You wish to kill yourself, or some one else to kill you, to enable you to join Esther, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"Well! suppose death, instead of uniting the spirits, merely separated the bodies; or, suppose she was to fail to be present at the rendezvous; or, rather, suppose neither of you were to go there. There is a state of nothingness in which some very sensible people are obstinate enough to believe."

"Will this man," said Eusebius, his voice almost choking from sheer despair, "this wretch, this fiend, never tire of torturing me?"

"Torture you! I! not the least in the world. During the last three hours you have been losing your way, and I am merely trying to put you in the right path. Besides," added the doctor, as if he were speaking to himself, "there is no reason why I should keep you under my knee to take your life when I choose; you must feel very uncomfortable in that position, and I am not very comfortable in mine; let us both get up and talk quietly."

And, adding example to precept, the doctor unloosed the vice-like grasp in which he had held Eusebius's wrists, rose to his feet, held out his hand, and assisted him up. When he had done so, he said, "Get me a chair to sit down on, my dear Eusebius."

And the latter, unable to understand the reason of the influence which the doctor exercised over him, did as he was bid, and drew the bamboo stool into the middle of the room, himself remaining standing. "Thank you," said the doctor. And then, seating himself as comfortably as possible upon the stool, he said, "Now you are a little calmer, tell me, my dear Eusebius, whether you do not think you were rather in too great a hurry to finish this little matter."

"What need was there for me to wait any longer?" asked the young man; "is not my Esther dead?" and he pointed to the stiffened corpse of his wife."

"Yes, I admit she is dead, quite dead; but are you

sure, poor simpleton that you are, that life, because you have lost a woman whom you loved, will have no comfort nor happiness for you in future?"

"If that was your object, if it was only to restrain my arm that you have been acting this comedy, your kind solicitude will have been useless. I have already told you, and I repeat it, that Esther was the only one I ever loved, that I shall never love any but her, and if it be not to-day, it will be to-morrow that I shall release myself from an existence which is a burden to me."

"There is nothing more to say, in that case; that is true sentiment, and I see that you love as deeply as any human being is capable of loving, perhaps; my curiosity is satisfied; for let me assure you, once for all, Eusebius Van den Beck, that I have no kindness or solicitude in me, nothing but curiosity, that is all. I experimentalize upon people's hearts and feelings, as my brethren do upon their bodies. Eh! eh! eh! it is sometimes just as dirty an occupation, but it is always far more amusing."

"Once for all, let this end," said Eusebius, stamping his foot on the ground, "for this conversation oppresses me more that I can express. What do you want with me? If your curiosity is satisfied, let me accomplish my destiny; all you have to do is to leave me that dagger, and in a few moments you will learn what love is really capable of in one who truly loved."

"You are in too great a hurry, my young friend," said the doctor; "fortunately I have plenty of time at my disposal, and am very far from sharing your impatience. Therefore, as you have raised this dagger against me, as it is only owing to me that you are still alive, it is for me, henceforth, to regulate the days, the hours, or the minutes which you may yet have to pass on this earth. You are, I should think, too honourable a man to contradict that proposition."

"What are you waiting for, then? What do you want? Explain yourself—speak."

"Come, come, Eusebius Van den Beck," continued the doctor; "how is it possible that a sensible fellow like

you could have supposed that Doctor Basilius, who never puts himself out of the way for any one, and who, only yesterday even, refused to go to Buitenzorg to see the governor of Java, who will be dead to-morrow, but whom he could have saved with a pinch of the powder he has in his pocket, would have walked a mile and a half in weather like that which the devil has treated us to this evening, and for no other purpose than to be present at the laying out of a corpse, and to listen to your lamentations ;—for I may as well tell you that when I left my house I knew perfectly well that your wife was dead already."

"Oh!" cried Eusebius, clutching hold of his hair and seizing his head between his hands, "you will drive me mad."

It seemed as if the young man had reached precisely that state of mind in which the doctor, that great anatomist of the human heart, wished to see him, for, again offering him the dagger, he said, "If you have really made up your mind, Eusebius Van den Beck, I will not prevent you any longer ; go and learn, in those unknown regions whence no traveller, as the poet Shakspeare says, has ever yet returned, whether the hell or the paradise of Christians, the gardens filled with houris of the father of all believers, the incarnations of Brahma, the Elysian fields of the Greeks, or the dark and gloomy state of nothingness, be the true hereafter. But, whatever be the regions you may meet with beyond the grave matters little, for you will not find Esther there."

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Eusebius, tearing his hair.

"For only suppose one thing."

"What?"

"Suppose that Esther is not dead."

"Esther not dead!" cried Eusebius, darting towards the bed, and pressing both his hands upon his wife's bosom, while he gazed at the doctor with a haggard look.

"I do not say that Esther is not dead ; I only say, suppose she is not dead ; or rather suppose that, being dead, I have the power to restore her to life."

"Oh!" exclaimed the young man, "that would be horrible."

"Capital," said the doctor; "now I have discovered the weak side of your devotedness, the limit of your boundless love: you could not resign yourself to live without Esther, but you would be less resigned than ever to leave her to live without you."

Eusebius fancied for a moment that the opportunity was offered him of showing the same example of devotedness as had been the case with Alcestis of old, and that the doctor proposed that he (Eusebius) should restore his wife's life by yielding up his own, in the same way that Alcestis, by dying, had restored the life of his wife.

At this thought all his calmness returned; he let his wife's body, which he had raised in his arms, fall back on the bed, and advancing towards the doctor, who had not stirred from his seat, he said, "You are mistaken: satisfy me that Esther is not dead; satisfy me that she will not sink under her fearful disease, nor under the regret which my own death will cause her; satisfy me that she may yet be happy in this world, even in the arms of another; and at that very moment I will yield up my own life,—with a heart full of regret it is true, but with the consolation that the remembrance of my affection will remain enduringly in my wife's heart."

There was so much passion, so much sincerity, so much enthusiasm in the tone and manner with which Eusebius had uttered these words, that the doctor could not resist their influence; and instead of answering him with his usual laugh, the sardonic expression which seemed stereotyped upon his face disappeared for a moment. "Be it so, then: Esther is not dead,—Esther will not die."

Eusebius interrupted him by a movement probably as full of menace as of joy, for his poor mind, driven alternately from grief to hope, was almost on the very verge of insanity.

"But," continued the doctor, "perhaps it would have been better for her and for yourself too, if I had not arrived in time to administer the potion which, in the

result of the crisis she is undergoing at the present moment, will, just as I please, terminate either in laying her in her coffin, or restoring her to life and health."

"And so it still depends upon you," cried Eusebius, "whether my Esther lives or dies?"

"Yes; and you see that I was quite right in returning to prevent you disposing of yourself."

"So that neither of us, in fact, will die."

"Perhaps so."

"Oh!" exclaimed the young man, throwing himself again upon the bed, "Esther, my own Esther, I shall see you happy once more."

"Yes; but I must warn you of one thing, and that is, that both of you will have to submit to a trial just as formidable, though in a different way, as that which you have both just now undergone. We shall see, friend Eusebius, if your affection for your wife, an affection which made you brave death, will be able to resist time and satiety."

"Oh, doctor! can you believe such a thing?"

"I believe that one sole affection is insufficient for one human existence; I believe that the words 'I love you' from the same lips must soon weary the same ear; and lastly I believe, as I told you a little while ago, that this young creature, dying in the brightness of her youth and beauty, full of faith in love, full of belief in Heaven, would have been really happier and more enviable than living deceived by you."

"Deceived by me! I deceive Esther!" cried Eusebius, raising his hands with a gesture full of fervent appeal to heaven; "if you could read in this heart which is overflowing with the fondest affection for Esther, you would see that not a single thought unconnected with her would be able to find a place in it."

"Cast your eyes around you, young man," said the doctor, "and you will see that everything modifies, everything changes, everything undergoes alteration in nature, and that the human heart cannot be the only thing which remains unaffected."

"If I could for one moment suppose that you were right, doctor, if the time should ever come when, even for a single instant, I should cease to love Esther, or should forget her so far as to be capable of deceiving her, were it for the loveliest creature in the whole world, I would snatch up that dagger, and this time it would no longer be to escape surviving her, or to enable her to survive me, but it would be to punish myself by plunging it into my heart. But, no, no, it is impossible; do you hear, doctor?—it is impossible."

"I am delighted that such is your conviction, Eusebius, because, as it depends upon me alone whether Esther is or is not restored to life, and as I do not intend to restore her to life except upon certain conditions, I was afraid you would refuse those conditions when you learnt what they were."

"Tell me what they are, doctor, for whatever they may be I consent to them beforehand,—even were I to pledge my soul to fulfil them," he added, in a solemn tone of voice.

"Eh! eh! eh!" said the doctor; "what the devil do you think I could do with your soul; if I have one, it is immortal, and in that case I have no need of yours; if I have none, why you have none either, since I am a man like yourself, a little older, and a little uglier, that is all. You cannot, therefore, sell me what you don't possess."

"What do you want me to do, then? Speak, and you will find me ready to sign the compact, whatever it may be."

"A compact, silly fellow; I have just questioned the existence of Heaven, and you suppose me to be illogical enough to believe in the devil. There is no question of compact or sorcery, but a case simply of a man who knows more than you do about the mysteries of the soul, about the springs and mechanism of the human body, and this man tells you that your wife lying yonder will live; but if you really and truly love her, as you say, you would do well, for her own sake, not to wish for her resurrection."

"A resurrection which would restore my Esther to

me, which would permit me to hear her voice once more!—you are speaking blasphemy."

"Blasphemy, you say; very well, be it so, but let us treat a business matter in a business way:—it is not a compact, as I told you just now, that I mean to propose, but a simple bargain, a kind of commercial transaction. If you should ever regret what I may do for Esther to day, if you should learn to curse that odious Doctor Basilius for having restored that young creature yonder to life, your life will belong to me, that is all. Observe, I say your life, without troubling myself about your soul, if you have one. It is the carrion, and not the vital spark, that I stake against that eternity of sentiment which you pretend to possess, nothing more and nothing less."

"Regret the miracle which shall have restored my Esther to my arms!—curse him who shall have snatched her from death!—oh, you do not, you cannot believe it, doctor."

"I believe it so thoroughly that I have brought a kind of bond or contract with me, so drawn up as to insure the fulfilment of the covenants."

"Give it me, doctor, and let me sign it at once."

"Ah! ah! you cannot sign without reading it; by and by you will be accusing me of having set a trap for you." He drew a pocket-book out of his pocket, and from the book he took a paper covered with writing. "You see," he said, "that it is only ink it is written with; here is the stamp of the honourable Dutch Company, which, ostensibly at least, has no connection with Lucifer. You can satisfy yourself that it has no smell of sulphur," said the doctor, holding out the paper to the young man. It was an ordinary stamped sheet of paper upon which merchants and lawyers draw up agreements; the one in question was drawn up in the form of a will, and ran as follows:—

"Disgusted with life, married to a woman whom I no longer love, having learnt to curse the day when Doctor Basilius restored to life one to whom a fatal destiny binds

me for ever, I have voluntarily deprived myself of existence, and I do not wish any one to be interfered with on account of my suicide.

"I leave my property to my natural heirs, but I wish my body to be given up to Doctor Basilius, or to whomsoever he may direct, in case of his own death, to take possession of it, and who will dispose of it in any way he may choose.

"Friday, 13th November, 1847."

Eusebius read aloud, and without pausing, the contents of this singular document. "A pen and ink, doctor; give me a pen and ink."

And the young man looked eagerly round, in search of what he asked. The doctor laid his hand upon his extended arm. "I have already told you, young man," he said, shaking his head, "that you are always in too great a hurry."

"I ask you for a pen and ink," was Eusebius's reply.

"Think it over well," answered the doctor; "I don't force you in any way; there is neither suggestion, nor deception, nor compulsion. Is it while in sound mind and body, and entirely of your own free will, that you sign this paper?"

"Without suggestion, without deception, without compulsion, in sound mind and body, and entirely of my own free will."

"I warn you of one thing, namely, that whether the rumours which people circulate about me be true or false, one thing is sure, that as soon as you shall have signed this paper, whether close at hand or far away, dead or alive, I shall be able to read in your heart your most secret thoughts as plainly as though I were reading in a book. By what has just taken place, and particularly by what will take place presently, you will be able to see that my knowledge—and I don't care how widely knowledge may have been diffused up to this present year of our Lord 1847—is very great for any one in this world to be the uncontrolled possessor of; that as soon as you shall have subscribed the conditions

of this contract, I can take your life, kill you if I choose; and that your death, as far as concerns those who may have the right to demand an account of it from me, will be nothing more than a suicide. Reflect then, once more, before you subject yourself to the proof, and if you are alarmed at the prospect, there is still time to draw back; take a final leave of your wife, who is not sensible of what is passing, and who will never know that your courage has failed you, and will pass away without pain into the eternal sleep of death."

Eusebius remained for a moment astounded rather than hesitating. "Oh! no, no," he at last cried out, "it would be unjust towards Heaven and to mankind, to one's heart and one's soul, if I were to partake of your terrible doubts. We will live, Esther," he continued, turning towards his wife, and as if inspired by fresh strength from the sight of her; "we will live to love each other, live for each other, live by and through each other, and whatever may be the miseries, the trials, and the bitter sorrows reserved for us, supported and strengthened by you, Esther, and strong in my own affection, I shall know how to sustain the struggle valiantly, and shall be able to find for you consolation and happiness even in the midst of our sufferings. Once more, give me a pen and ink."

"You will have no trials or miseries; on the contrary, you will, in the world's estimation, be rich and happy. Now, are you quite determined to sign this document, Eusebius?"

"The only reproach I have to make against you is, that you should have delayed so long giving me what I ask. I have neither pen nor ink here, but a man who possesses the power you do cannot be at a loss for such a mere trifle."

"The fact is," returned the doctor; "I always carry a pen about with me to write my prescriptions, and as far as the ink is concerned, why if there be none here, we will do as the story-books tells us people used to do. Eh! eh! eh! a drop of blood will answer the purpose."

"A drop of blood! be it so," said Eusebius, drawing up the sleeve of his left arm.

The doctor drew from the lining of his overcoat a steel pen with a point as sharp as a lancet, and pricked Eusebius in one of the veins of the arm. Eusebius uttered a slight cry, and a drop of blood appeared like a liquid ruby, which the doctor took up with the point of his pen, and presented the pen to Eusebius, saying to him as he did so, "It is not from compulsion or violence, but of your own full and free will?"

"It is of my own full and free will," returned Eusebius; "nothing compels, nothing obliges me to do it." And taking the pen out of Doctor Basilius's hands, without trembling or hesitation, he signed the document with his blood.

It neither thundered nor lightened after he had affixed his signature, and nature remained as undisturbed as if it had been a mere matter of an ordinary bill of exchange.

"If you repent what you have done," said the doctor, "you are at liberty even now to tear up the paper."

Eusebius's only reply was handing him the document. "This paper is yours," he said; "but Esther is mine."

"That is only fair," replied the doctor, taking the paper and placing it in his pocket-book; "I am now going away: until I reach the door yonder, you can still call me back; but as soon as I shall have once crossed the threshold, it will be too late."

"Away with you, doctor," said the young man, "and may Heaven guide you."

"Devil take your wishes," returned the doctor; and advancing towards the door, he paused before crossing the threshold, as if to give Eusebius time to call him back, in case he might regret the bargain he had made; he then raised the matting before the doorway, held out his hand to ascertain if the rain had ceased, and after having nodded to Eusebius, seemed at last to have made up his mind to cross the threshold. The matting fell behind him.

At the same moment the young Dutchman felt some-

thing like a cloud pass across his eyes, his limbs trembled under him, and a feeling of drowsiness which he could not account for stole over his senses. A sound like the beating of the surf upon the rocks rang in his ears, and then in the midst of this confused din, which was owing to the blood rushing to his temples, he heard the short dry laugh of the doctor.

He approached the bed on which Esther was laid, to see if, according to the promise of Basilius, there were any symptom of returning vitality to be observed. But his eyes closed in spite of his efforts to keep them open, and his limbs failing him altogether he sank upon the floor and fell into a deep sleep, with his head leaning against the bed whereon his young wife, still motionless and silent, was lying to all appearance quite dead.

CHAPTER IV.

It was broad daylight when Eusebius Van den Beck opened his eyes. The sun was shining brightly, and its rays passing through the bamboo walls of the cottage, traced a thousand bright fantastic figures upon the floor. When he returned to his senses Eusebius hardly knew whether he was sleeping or dreaming. He had lost all recollection not only of what had taken place before he had fallen asleep, but also of his present existence. At that moment he heard himself called by a soft voice, a voice he well knew—the voice of Esther.

"Heaven have mercy on me!" said the poor fellow, whose aching brain could not collect its ideas, and who only remembered that he had seen his wife stretched cold and stiff upon the bed! "I cannot fancy it can be true!"

"Eusebius, dearest," continued the soft voice, "where are you?" Eusebius bounded to his feet. He perceived Esther alive, really and truly alive; she was sitting up

in bed, smiling, and with the same broken glass before her which the doctor had made use of to establish one of his disheartening comparisons; she was engaged in arranging her dishevelled tresses. Coquetry and existence had awakened at the same moment in the young woman's heart. Eusebius uttered a loud cry, sprang upon the bed, threw his arms round Esther, took her upon his knees and covered her with frenzied kisses.

"Yes, yes, yes, it is indeed you," he exclaimed: "oh! let me look at you, let me look at the soft glow of the blood that circulates in your veins. Yes, yes, this heart that I thought would never trob again, beats once more; those eyes which I thought were for ever closed, are bent upon me now. Oh! speak to me, Esther, speak to me; let me once more listen to that voice which I thought would never breathe its whispers in my ears again."

"What is the matter with you, Eusebius?" asked his young wife, looking at him with a tender smile; "you seem quite excited; how pale you are; your clothes are all in disorder; you alarm me; what, in Heaven's name, has happened?"

"Nothing, my own darling, only a frightful nightmare, which has disturbed my rest. Fancy, Esther, I thought you were dead; and this dream had so completely assumed in my heart and mind all the appearances of reality, that when you called me at first, I could not summon up sufficient resolution to cast my eyes upon the bed, where I had seen you lying cold, speechless, and rigid in death."

"What nonsense!" said Esther, kissing her husband; "what nonsense! I, on the contrary, never had such delicious dreams. I thought I had put on a pair of wings, had flown through the clouds and the blue sky, until I reached a throne, surrounded by the angels of heaven, one of whom placed a crown upon my head and a bouquet in my hand, not earthly and fading flowers such as these," she said, pointing disdainfully to the crown and bouquet which her husband had made her during her

sleep, "but of heavenly lilies with calices of diamonds and leaves of emeralds. And then there arose through the perfume-laden air sounds of unseen music, beautiful, delicious, and absorbing. Never, dear Eusebius, never have I slept so soundly; never have I felt so well and so happy as I do this morning. It seems as if the blood flows more glowingly and swiftly through my veins. Dearest Eusebius," added the young woman, leaning her head upon her husband's shoulder, throwing herself back, and turning towards the latter's face eyes full of coquetry and deep affection, "dear Eusebius, what I am going to say may seem like a penitential confession,—but I feel as if I love you to-day very differently to what I did yesterday; that I have brought back from the paradise of my dream something purer, lovelier, and holier, and that I am much more your own since I no longer suffer from that horrible weight which oppressed and stifled me, which seemed indeed to contract my heart in its impulses towards the one I adore so passionately."

"Esther, Esther!" murmured Eusebius in broken accents, for he gradually began to believe that the events of the night had been nothing more than a wild dream, although the visit to heaven, which comforted the heart and illumined the face of his wife, certainly troubled him a little; "do you remember, Esther, whether any extraordinary, any supernatural circumstances preceded or accompanied your sleep?"

"I do not recollect; I slept as angels sleep, and I leave the monopoly of frightful nightmares to you. It is the long sleep and the tranquil rest I have enjoyed which must have done me so much good."

"It must have been a dream," said Eusebius, passing his hand across his brow; "and now I know that it cannot have been anything else, it is very good of me to trouble myself about it at all."

"Come, throw aside this thoughtful, anxious air, I desire you," said Esther; "have you forgotten the daring you displayed, when on a certain evening, while rowing me in a boat upon the lake—upon the beautiful lake with its dark

green waters, I authorized you to ask my father for this hand, which had pressed yours so many times?"

"Yes, Esther, I remember, I promised that you should reign despotically the queen of our poor little kingdom."

"Exactly so. Well! your queen desires you to look smilingly at her, and as a reward for your submission she has a surprise in store for you."

"What is it, darling? confide it to me, and the pleasure which you promise me will not be lessened, I assure you."

"Well, Eusebius dear, I feel strong enough to-day to get up, and coquettish enough to wish to look pretty; I will choose the most becoming dress of my scanty wardrobe, and you shall take me out and let me warm myself in the beautiful sun, whose rays are passing through the walls of our poor dwelling, and, as if to make us forget the way in which it reaches us, traces those pretty figures upon the floor."

Eusebius cast his eyes round the room, and in the full light of a gleam of sunshine he perceived an object which reflected its fires with the brilliancy of a broken mirror. He sprang from the bed, and stooping down, picked up the poniard which Doctor Basilius had offered him, and which had played so important a part in the drama of the previous evening. It was indeed the same Malay weapon, dark-blue in colour, and its strange form not unlike a tongue of fire.

Eusebius started, looked at it a moment in deep silence, then placing it upon the table, returned to his wife, and sat down upon the bed shuddering and his face overcast with gloom.

Esther asked the reason of her husband's sudden change of manner, and the meaning of the weapon, which she had never seen in his possession before. Unable to bury such a secret in his heart, and fearing that he might betray it unconsciously, he related to her all that had taken place during her singular sleep. His wife listened to him unmoved, and without exhibiting the slightest terror.

"Well!" she said, when her husband had finished, "I do not see what there is to inspire either fear or distress; on the contrary, my gratitude towards that kind doctor is very great, not so much for preserving my own life as for his excellent idea of creating a new bond of union between our two existences."

"But," exclaimed Eusebius, in terror, "do you suppose such a thing can be possible?"

"I do not know whether it be possible or not," Esther rejoined; "but, for my own part, I should find a great consolation in thinking that the end of my affection would be the end of my life. Your friend, the doctor, is certainly an excellent man, and the first time I see him I will throw my arms round his neck to thank him."

"I am quite easy in that respect, for his face will cure you of your fancy."

"Is he so very frightful, then?"

"Not precisely so; on the contrary, indeed, his face would even be agreeable enough if it were not for his laugh, which sounds like the echo of a laugh of Satan himself; and if it were not for his eyes, which every now and then seem to flash like those of a wild beast."

"In any case, dearest, his outside is not in keeping with what he promises, since, according to your account, we both owe him our lives."

"Yes; only one thing makes me uneasy."

"What is that?"

"I cannot understand the singular interest he takes in you, in you particularly."

"What can the cause of that interest matter to us, Eusebius, since we are enabled to appreciate its effects? Fancy, dear Eusebius, that had it not been for him, some horrible person or another would probably at this very moment be busily engaged in making my shroud, and in nailing the boards together destined for my last remains. You could not, you say, make up your mind to live without me, and I swear, Eusebius, that I will never forget your devoted affection. Remember, too, that had it not been for him everything would be at an end for both of

us; that we should no longer be enjoying the bright air, the warm sun, our love for each other, our fond kisses; and that it is to him that we owe all this, Eusebius, to this man who has been a visible providence on earth for us both."

"Certainly," replied the young man; "but we should be mad to suppose that the service he has rendered us has been rendered from mere philanthropy. There is, I feel convinced, some secret and terrible menace hidden beneath the good he has done us."

"In the mean time we live, in the mean time we are young and love each other."

Then suddenly looking at her husband, she said, "Are you afraid of ceasing to love me soon? and are you already beginning to tremble for your life?"

"Oh, Esther!" was the young man's reply. Esther began to laugh.

"As for me, dearest and best-beloved," she said, leaning her head upon her husband's shoulder with the most charming coquetry, "I feel so sure that your heart will never have a throb for any one but myself, that I shall abandon myself to our new destinies without the slightest apprehension."

"And I too," replied Eusebius; "and what I have said to you on the subject is merely to avoid accepting, without thoroughly discussing it in all its bearings, a phantasmagoria, which, now that it is broad daylight and you are alive and well, seems only fit to frighten little children with."

"Nay, dearest," said Esther, "in this respect I do not altogether share your opinion; not only is there something supernatural in the doctor's sudden appearance; but more than that, my recovery overthrows all the medical theories on the subject, and the whole logic of medical knowledge hitherto received without dispute."

"Perhaps you think as others do," said Eusebius, shuddering in spite of himself, "that Doctor Basilius holds some communion with the Spirit of Evil?"

"Do not let us try to penetrate this secret," replied Esther gravely; "let us be satisfied, I repeat, to enjoy the

benefits he has conferred upon us; and let us prove to him, since you say he doubts it, that two beings can grow old together with no other thought than that of loving each other, and of passing through this world indifferent to everything which does not constitute their mutual happiness."

And, with the view of carrying out this theory, she displayed so much coquetry, showed herself so affectionate, and so desirous to please, that she succeeded in dissipating the clouds which overhung her husband's brow. She rose and, leaning upon her husband's arm, walked several times up and down the room, and at last felt strong enough to risk breathing the air at the open door.

"Well," she said, when Eusebius had placed the bamboo stool which Doctor Basilius had used close to the threshold of the door, "I feel as if I were getting quite well; and we must soon think of your finding some occupation, for my unlucky illness, which was the cause of your losing the situation we had relied upon, must have reduced our finances terribly."

"Alas! it is so," said her husband with a sorrowful look at his boxes, which had been stripped of nearly all their contents, which he had been obliged to dispose of in order to meet the expenses which his wife's prolonged illness had necessitated.

"Yes, I know, or rather I guess, that you have been making all kinds of sacrifices," said Esther, as she observed his look. "Poor darling, not one of them escaped me, but my prostration was so complete that I had not sufficient strength to thank you for them; but do not make yourself uneasy, I will pay you a hundredfold for your devotion, and for my own momentary ingratitude," she continued, clinging round her husband's neck, and pressing her lips to his.

Then suddenly she exclaimed: "I have it! why should you not address yourself to Doctor Basilius for some employment? He told you that he took an interest in me, and since he has restored me to life, he cannot now leave us to die of hunger."

Eusebius's brow darkened at these words, and he abruptly returned to the cottage. Esther followed him, and found him seated upon the bed, with his head between his hands.

"What is the matter?" she asked, drawing his hands from his face, and kissing him on the forehead.

"Never speak to me again of that man," exclaimed Eusebius, pushing his wife away; "as it is, we already owe him too much. If during the brief period he passed here he restored your life, he has poisoned the air I breathe. I cannot conceal it from you; but since this morning I am no longer the same man — since this morning I hardly seem to know myself. I ought to abandon myself entirely to the happiness of seeing you saved; I ought to forget the world, forget mankind, and bend my thoughts entirely upon one person — upon you — upon your life, which has been so marvellously restored when I believed you dead. Yet that man's laugh haunts me, even in your arms; his voice mingles with yours — with yours, which speaks to me in accents of love; and then, oh, Esther! pity me — then I feel as if I had fallen under the control of a superior power, and as if I were no longer master of my own free will. It is the most horrible torture, Esther — a torture beyond endurance; and if it continue much longer, I feel there will be little happiness for me in this world."

Esther was about to rally him from these nervous apprehensions, which to her seemed so perfectly chimerical, when she fancied she heard someone knock against the door-post, over which the matting was hanging.

"Come in," said Eusebius, who had also heard the knocking, and who sincerely wished for some kind of interruption likely to change the current of his thoughts at that moment. The matting was thrust aside at the summons, and a man dressed in black entered the room. "Monsieur Eusebius Van den Beck?" inquired the stranger.

"I am that person," replied Eusebius, rising; "what may you want with me?"

"M. Eusebius Van den Beck, the husband of Mademoiselle Esther Mavius?" repeated the man in black.

"I am Eusebius Van den Beck, and this is my wife, Esther Mavius."

"This lady, then, is the daughter of William Mavius, notary at Haarlem, and of Jane Catherine Mortier, his wife?"

"Yes," said Eusebius, almost frightened at these imposing preliminaries.

"In that case, it is you, Eusebius Van den Beck, and you, Esther Mavius, whom my business concerns; and I have only now to discharge the melancholy mission with which I am intrusted."

"For Heaven's sake speak, sir," said Esther—"speak, for you make us tremble with anxiety. What is the mission you allude to?"

"It is not more than an hour since we were summoned to place the seals upon the effects belonging to Monsieur John Henry Basil Mortier, better known in this city under the name of Doctor Basilius. We hastened to his residence, and found a will upon the chimney-piece—a will which is now in the hands of Maître Arnold Maës, notary, of Batavia—a will by which he constitutes Jane Esther Mavius, the daughter of his late sister Catherine Mortier, otherwise Mavius, the sole residuary legatee of all his property."

"Doctor Basilius dead, do you say?" Eusebius stammered out."

"Alas! it is but too true, sir," replied the legal personage in a sorrowful and official tone, assuming an air best suited to the occasion; "your unfortunate relative was drowned this morning as he was going on board a vessel in the roadstead."

Eusebius was so paralysed by the intelligence, that he did not even think of asking how the accident had happened.

"My uncle!" exclaimed Esther; "it was my uncle, then! so that explains the singular interest which he took in me."

"Has his body been discovered?" asked Eusebius.

"Yes, sir; and it has been removed to his own house, where you can pay him the last melancholy services."

"But is it certain he is dead—quite dead?" asked Eusebius.

The legal personage looked at Eusebius with a bewildered air. "All the medical men in the city have stated him to be dead; but you have only to satisfy yourself of it."

"I will do so, and at this very moment too," exclaimed Eusebius.

And without waiting to arrange his dress, which was in great disorder, he hurried out of the cottage; while Esther, who was not a prey to the same anxiety which possessed her husband, could not restrain her tears at the fate of the uncle whom she had heard spoken of in her childhood, who had quitted Haarlem when twenty years old, and who had only revealed his subsequent existence to her by an act of kindness.

"Your husband appears to be singularly attached to the lamented deceased, madam," said the visitor, preparing to take his leave of Esther. "Will you have the goodness to remind him that I place myself entirely at his orders, to carry out the requisite formalities which he will be under the necessityof seeing completed."

And saluting Esther as a subaltern member of the legal profession salutes a wealthy heiress—that is to say with the profoundest humility,—he quitted the house with the object of joining Eusebius, who, however, was already out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

Eusebius Van den Beck hurried along at so fast a pace, that his legal friend had no chance of overtaking him, and in less than a quarter of an hour he had arrived at the lower town. During the whole morning, as he had acknowledged to Esther, he had never once ceased thinking of Doctor Basilius.

His reason refused to believe that the man was endowed with any supernatural power; and yet Eusebius could not collect and arrange the different circumstances of which he had been an eye-witness under the category of ordinary events.

Since the morning, however, although he repudiated the idea of its possibility, he could not resist a profound feeling of terror when he thought that if he were to give any credence to the diabolical little doctor's assertions, that redoubtable individual was aware of every mental struggle now being carried on within him, and conscious of every wish of his heart.

Since the morning, too, he had felt as if his bosom was laid bare, as if an enormous eye was engaged in gauging its secrets; and the sense of this eye being constantly upon him was as if the sharpest steel was being thrust into his flesh.

His life consequently became, as he had told Esther, more insupportable every moment. But the sudden and unexpected death of Doctor Basilius singularly simplified the question. It added a material impossibility to the moral impossibility which Eusebius's reasoning faculties had already set up as a dyke or dam wherewith to check the wanderings of his imagination.

He never bestowed a thought upon the fortune which had so marvellously sought him out in the depths of his misery, to convert him into one of the richest inhabitants

of Batavia; but, without rejoicing at the misfortune of one whom he ought to regard as his wife's saviour, he was not exemplary enough to afflict himself at an event which freed him from a bondage at which he revolted, in spite of the innocence and purity of his intentions.

The pressing need he experienced above every other was to satisfy himself thoroughly that Doctor Basilius had not been able to emancipate himself from the common lot affecting all men. The death, in fact, which the doctor had been unable to escape was the negation of the power he had pretended to possess against death.

And on acquiring the positive certainty that Doctor Basilius was really and effectually dead, Eusebius felt he should naturally resume that happy and contented frame of mind which he had lost for several hours.

Hurried, however, as his walk was, his speed did not prevent him from remarking that the sailors about the port, and particularly the Malay sailors, were collected in little groups and engaged in the most animated conversation. This seemed natural enough, for he remembered to have heard that Dr. Basilius was adored by the seafaring population of the quarter he had selected as his residence, a choice of which the inhabitants of Batavia had uselessly sought to penetrate the motives, for that particular quarter was fatal to Europeans.

People were naturally astonished that Doctor Basilius should have resisted the influence of the mephitic exhalations which arose from the neighbouring marshes; and his undoubted wealth had contributed, in no indifferent degree, to confirm the strange rumours afloat respecting his relations with the Evil One.

Eusebius Van den Beck followed, this time in the broad light of day and in fine weather, the same road which, the previous evening, we saw him take in the height and fury of the storm; and after having passed along the paved footway, and crossed the marsh and a small plantation of mangrove-trees, he found himself in front of the doctor's house.

As on the preceding evening, the house seemed

uninhabited, not a sound proceeded from the interior, nor was there anything from the outside to indicate that any tragic event had happened within, except that the door, which had been so carefully closed and bolted, had been left open, and was banging to and fro with the wind. Eusebius did not even take the trouble to knock at the door, but merely pushed it open and entered.

He went straight to the parlour where the pretty Dutch girl had made him wait the night before. The bales, the packages, and opened boxes were in their places, but his little companion of the previous evening was absent from hers. The parlour was completely deserted. Eusebius called out, but no one answered or came at his summons. He turned round and straightway made for the door through which the young girl had disappeared when the doctor had summoned her to his presence.

The door opened into a dark passage, which he forthwith entered, and at the end of which he perceived a faint light glimmering through the crevice of another door; the light seemed to proceed from the flickering flame of a torch or taper.

Eusebius pushed open the door, and started back with surprise as he found himself upon the threshold of a room furnished so completely in the Dutch fashion that had it not been for the bright rays of the sun shining through the lozenge-shaped panes of glass of a small window set in their leaden framework, he might have fancied himself on the foggy banks of the Zuyder Zee.

Not a single thing was wanted to complete the delusion, not even the delph china, nor the boxes filled with flowering hyacinths and tulips from Haarlem, nor the small copper lustres, nor several pictures of Gerard Dow and Mieris, nor the furniture and chests of polished oak and mahogany, so bright and lustrous as almost to induce the belief they had been French-polished the night before, nor even the stove of worked iron, although, with the forty degrees of temperature peculiar to Batavia, this do-

mestic article of furniture was treated as a mere object of curiosity.

In the corner of the room opposite to the door was an ebony bedstead, its twisted posts supporting a drapery of green serge. It was impossible for Eusebius, where he was standing, to observe who or what it was that was lying upon the bed. Opposite to the bed was a table, and upon it was standing a small copper crucifix, four lighted wax candles, together with a basin containing holy water, and a small branch of dried boxwood. Between the bed and the table a female figure, dressed completely in black, was kneeling, in the attitude of prayer. At the sound of the opening door the young woman turned round, which enabled Eusebius to recognize the pretty Dutch girl. She made a sign to the young man to place himself by her side, and then continued her prayers. From that moment Eusebius concluded that he was in the mortuary chamber, and that Doctor Basilius was lying on the funeral couch.

Eusebius felt very disposed, however, to satisfy himself on the point; but he would have been obliged to remove the table and to approach nearer to the bed in such a way as to look over his young companion's shoulder. Throwing himself on his knees at the foot of the bed, he endeavoured to pray, but his agitation was so great that the attempt was fruitless.

He looked at his companion as if to read the truth upon her face. She was praying with pious fervour and with evident sincerity; and heavy tears were flowing down her pallid cheeks.

"It looks," said Eusebius to himself, "as if this terrible doctor was a tolerably good sort of fellow after all, for this young girl's distress seems as if it were really sincere."

And with a view of thanking her, in his character of heir, for so much feeling, Eusebius held out his hand to the young girl, who seemed to have misunderstood the meaning of the gesture, for, rising from her knees, she held out the branch of box dipped in the holy water, and

moved back, so as to allow him to fulfil the pious duty he had seemed to her so eager to discharge.

Eusebius found himself opposite to the corpse, which assuredly was that of Doctor Basilius, who, he was now satisfied, was really and truly dead. His death had been so unexpected and so sudden that it had in no way altered his features. His eyes, however, were closed, his breathing suspended, his heart had ceased to beat.

The short time he had remained in the water had prevented his face from acquiring the livid colour which usually disfigures the features of those who meet their death by drowning. The grey locks, however, which were thoroughly impregnated with the sea water, adhered closely to each other, and seemed glued to his forehead, almost covering it as well as the eyes.

But his mouth had lost nothing of its mocking character, and seemed to have escaped the rigidity of the rest of the face; for at times Eusebius fancied that he should presently see it drawn up at the corners, and that he should hear the doctor's metallic laugh ring in his ear. His hands were folded over his breast; and, as if confident in the divine mercy, the pious Dutch girl had fastened them together with a chaplet of flowers.

Eusebius, availing himself of an opportunity when his young countrywoman was absorbed in her prayers, touched the fingers of the corpse: they were as cold as marble. All further doubt was at an end; the doctor was sleeping the last eternal sleep.

As he withdrew, Eusebius Van den Beck heaved a sigh, which, if it did not testify any dissatisfaction, at least indicated that his heart was relieved from an enormous load. When he returned to the little parlour, he perceived that the young Flemish girl had followed him. As she was no longer restrained by the presence of the corpse, she threw her arms round Eusebius's neck, and, kissing him, burst into tears.

"What will become of me?" she cried; "poor Doctor Basilius, to lose so kind a master so suddenly!"

"But how did the accident happen?" asked Eusebius, who had not as yet learned any precise details upon the subject.

"He was on his way to visit some patients on board a Chinese junk; his boat, struck by a cross sea, was capsized; he fell into the sea, and when he was taken out of the water he was no more."

"Gracious Heaven!" said Eusebius.

"What a loss for all of us!" said the girl; "he was so good, so charitable."

"But, if I am not mistaken, this is hardly the language you used last evening, my poor child."

"You must have misunderstood me, sir. Could I, without the blackest ingratitude, have spoken in any other terms of one whose bread I have eaten for the last two years, and who was as good as a father to me."

"Ah!" said Eusebius, somewhat surprised. "Doctor Basilius was as good as a father to you, do you say?"

"Certainly; and if he had lived, I should never have known what want was; but what will become of me now Heaven only knows."

And with these words the young girl's lamentations broke out afresh; they were apparently so sincere that Eusebius, who, it must be acknowledged, had entertained certain ideas upon the young girl's position in the doctor's house somewhat disadvantageous to her moral character, hardly knew what to think.

"I promise you that I will see what can be done for you," he replied; "I have not forgotten, and never shall forget the offer you made me yesterday evening."

"A situation in this town," returned the young girl, "never! never! You are probably not aware that no honest girl can accept the position which Europeans fill in most of the houses in Batavia?"

"If you prefer it, I will pay your passage, and you shall return to Holland."

"Alas! sir, my parents are dead, and there are nothing but the graves of those I have lost to return to yonder; but that does not matter; and, although I have already

experienced the dangers a young girl risks in undertaking so long a passage in company with a set of unprincipled and irreligious men, I will avail myself of your offer, M. Van den Beck, and will return to Holland. I owe it to the memory of my benefactor to keep myself pure and honest."

At this moment loud cries were heard from the upper story; the young Dutch girl turned visibly pale at the sound.

"What is that?" asked Eusebius.

"I hardly know," replied his young companion, attempting to divert his attention; "probably some of the Malays fighting."

"No," said Eusebius, with an imperative gesture; "it was a woman's cry I heard. You are not alone in this house, then?"

And before she could prevent him, and in spite of her prayers and entreaties, Eusebius darted up a staircase which seemed to lead to the upper apartments of the house. He crossed four or five rooms, all filled with various articles of merchandise in the greatest confusion, and which were nothing more than a repetition of what he had observed in the little parlour on the ground-floor.

As he advanced, he still heard the same cries, only shriller and more terrible. The cries seemed to proceed from somewhere above his head, and yet he could not perceive any staircase leading to a higher story. At last, however, he observed in the corner of one of the rooms a kind of ladder made of bamboos; he ran up this ladder, and on touching the ceiling observed a trap-door. He pushed the trap-door open with his hand, and passing his head through the opening, a strange sight was immediately revealed to him.

The kind of belvedere into which Eusebius had just penetrated was something like one of the negro-cabins at Madagascar, only circular in form. Above an open trellis-work, which allowed free access to the air, enabling the city, the mangrove-wood, and the roadstead to be seen through the interstices, huge bamboo-trees

fastened together at the top, and, interlaced with branches of cocoanut-trees, formed a pointed roof sufficiently thick and sufficiently elevated to render the heat, thanks to the air which circulated freely there, almost endurable.

The only furniture the cabin possessed was a cane seat, a wooden chest with brass ornaments and inlaid with shells, and several earthen vessels lying about the floor. A hammock of cocoanut fibre, suspended from two of the bamboos forming part of the roof, occupied the whole diameter of the place. A man was reclining in the hammock with an oscillating movement, which was probably renewed in some way or another when he was on the point of stopping.

But what most amazed Eusebius was the appearance of a woman, who, without paying any attention to his entrance, continued to utter the shrieks which had first excited his curiosity. This woman was a negress of the most glorious and most marvellous beauty of form—a perfect ebony Venus, in fact. She was scarcely fifteen years of age; her features were of the utmost regularity, a small, slender neck surmounting a pair of shoulders delicately but plumply formed, and a bosom as beautifully modelled as the most perfect work of art to be found in ancient or modern sculpture.

She wore a kind of blue cotton dress, with gold and purple stripes, manufactured at Tunis, and known by the negresses as *fouta*. This material, which revealed the whole of the upper part of the body, was fastened at the waist by a buckle of glass beads, while its folds left the development of the large and admirably-shaped hips to the imagination to realize. This woman seemed a prey to the most violent grief. She held in each of her hands a sharp and pointed shell, with which she struck her bosom and her arms from time to time, wounding deeply her mutilated flesh, and uttering the cries which had attracted Eusebius's attention. The blood flowed profusely.

The cabin, lighted merely by the sun's rays which filtered through the trellis-work and the bamboo-canes, was, however, dark enough to prevent Eusebius per-

ceiving immediately what the woman was doing. As soon as he observed what was actually passing, he sprang into the cabin, and attempted to check her arm. But at this moment he found himself face to face with the man whom he had seen reclining in the hammock, and he staggered back horror-stricken.

With a movement as quick as thought, Eusebius, who in the dim obscurity still doubted the reality of what he beheld, tore down a portion of the trellis-work, and a ray of light illumined the cabin, and lighted up the face of this man, or rather of this corpse, for it was Doctor Basilius. It was the livid but calm face which the young man had left below, with the hair adhering to the features, and the mouth contracted, lying upon the ebony bedstead in the room on the ground-floor.

Eusebius felt his knees sink under him, his hair seemed to stand on end, he staggered back, and, unable to take his eyes from the corpse, he made his way to the trap-door, slid down, rather than simply descended, the bamboo ladder, and fled at the top of his speed, leaving the negress to continue undisturbed her sanguinary testimonies of despair in favour of the deceased.

When Eusebius Van den Beck reached the little parlour on the ground-floor, his emotion was so violent that he was obliged to sit down. Large beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead, his teeth chattered convulsively together, and his heart throbbed so violently that he was afraid of being suffocated.

To admit a little air into the room where he had taken refuge, he drew up a Chinese blind which hung before the window. This window looked out upon a small garden planted with European shrubs, which throve in that calcined soil as tropical trees do in our hot-houses.

Two Malays were silently engaged in an occupation which puzzled Eusebius Van den Beck to such an extent that it momentarily took away his attention from the terror with which he was overpowered. The two men had in fact raised in the middle of the garden a kind of funeral pile, which was already nearly four feet high, and

they continued to arrange the pieces of wood in symmetrical order, in such a manner as to make it assume enormous dimensions. Upon every layer of wood they placed small bundles of rice-straw, branches of resinous trees, particularly branches of the turpentine and camphor.

Eusebius, more and more astonished at what he saw, leaped out of the window, and advanced towards the two Malays, who made no attempt to discontinue their work as he approached. "What the devil are you doing there?" he asked.

"Can't you see?" one of them answered in bad Dutch; "it hardly looks much like anything else than a funeral pile, does it?"

"It is a funeral pile, then?"

"Yes."

"And what do you mean to do with it?"

The Malay shrugged his shoulders, and mounting upon the pile carefully arranged several of the pieces of wood which his companion had placed unevenly. Eusebius renewed his question.

"What a question to ask? What is to be done with the dead body?" was the Malay's answer. "Would you have it thrown into the sea like a dog?" As he said this, he pointed, not at the ground-floor where Eusebius had seen the doctor's corpse upon the ebony bedstead, not at the belvedere where he had just seen this same corpse in a hammock, but at a kind of Hindoo kiosque, which was visible at the end of the garden.

Impelled by a curiosity which he found it impossible to check or control, Eusebius advanced in the direction of the kiosque. It was a tolerably large building, its whitewashed walls had been erected upon a course of hewn stone, roughly sculptured, representing fantastic figures of men with bulls' or elephants' heads, bodies with numerous arms, hermaphroditic figures, in fact the whole array of Hindoo theogony.

At the door stood an old man with a white beard, dressed in the costume of the Brahmins of the Malabar

coast, who seemed to be directing the labour of the two Malays. "The corpse?" asked Eusebius abruptly.

The old man, not vouchsafing an answer, indicated, by a movement of his thumb over his shoulder, the interior of the kiosque, and drew aside to let him pass. Eusebius Van den Beck thereupon found himself in a large room, lighted by a dozen bronze lamps of antique shapes, worthy of Etruria, from each of which a bright flame escaped, which illumined the apartment.

In the centre was a bed, or rather a pile of cushions, and lying upon the cushions was another corpse, which Eusebius immediately recognized as that of the doctor.

It did not differ in any one single respect from the others he had seen. Opposite to the corpse, beneath a niche containing the image of the god Brahma, and in front of which three of the lamps we have referred to were burning, a woman was seated on a gilded chair, leaning her back against the wall.

This third reproduction of the corpse completely unsettled Eusebius Van den Beck's nerves. Suddenly transported into a world of phantoms and phantasms, he scarcely knew whether he was awake or dreaming; his blood rushed tumultuously to his brain, and almost deafened him; he thought his senses were about to abandon him, but no sooner did his eyes meet the fixed gaze of the strange woman who was watching beside the corpse, than he found himself unable to withdraw them from her face.

She was a young girl whose complexion was not bronzed like that of the Indian woman of the peninsula or the Malay of the Sunda Isles, but of a clear yellow like the women of Visapour.

She possessed that regularity of features which characterizes the Caucasian race; and her large, full eyes were, by an exception singularly rare in women of her colour, of the deepest and clearest blue. Her shoulders were bare; her bosom was covered with a kind of cuirass, made of a very light wood, inlaid with gold and silver and ornamented with precious stones; this cuirass, which cor-

rectly defined the outlines of her figure, did not descend lower than her stomach, which was bare like her shoulders.

A muslin scarf was fastened round her waist, and its transparent folds served as a transition between the nudity of the upper part of the body and the profusion of drapery which hid the hips and the lower extremities as far as her feet, which were almost entirely concealed. Her arms, neck, and fingers were loaded with bracelets, necklaces, and rings, of singular form and wonderful workmanship; her head, in marked contrast, was destitute of all ornament whatever; a simple crown of flowers and lotus-leaves was fastened in her tresses, which were as black and shining as a raven's wing.

She sat silent and motionless as a statue; her eyes alone betrayed her existence, and those eyes, fixed upon Eusebius Van den Beck, seemed to summon him to her.

"Who are you?" said Eusebius.

The woman looked at him fixedly, and intimated by a gesture that she did not understand his question. He took hold of her hand, which she neither resisted nor resented. It was as cold as ice, and yet it seemed to Eusebius as if it injected fire into his own veins.

"Come," he said, making a sign for her to follow him.

Her eyelids drooped slowly as, with a sign of refusal, she pointed to the corpse.

Eusebius remembered that there is a custom of the Malabar Indians requiring the wife to ascend her husband's funeral pile. He pointed to the pile of wood, which could be seen through the opening of the doorway of the kiosque, and which, owing to the zeal of the two Indians, was gradually increasing in height, and made a sign of interrogation to his silent companion.

She hung down her head sorrowfully; then, taking from the flowers wreathed round her head, one of the lotus-buds, she presented it to the young Dutchman, who, hardly cognizant of what he was doing, accepted it from her hand.

"It is impossible," exclaimed Eusebius, "that a bar-

barous custom which has been abolished in India can exist here. Besides, this man was not your husband, and no religious prejudices can condemn you to die with him. I will go and see the governor, for I cannot allow so young and pretty a woman to suffer such a cruel death."

At this moment Eusebius fancied he heard the harsh grating laugh of Doctor Basilius ringing in his ears. He turned round, fully expecting to find the doctor standing beside him, or at least sitting up on the cushions. The corpse was in the same place, as stiff and motionless as ever,—not a muscle of the face had changed. Yielding to the increasing terror which possessed him, but from which the appearance of the strange creature watching beside the corpse had momentarily distracted his attention, he buried his face in his hands, and fled away without looking once behind him.

CHAPTER VI.

When Eusebius found himself upon the quays he felt his breast relieved from an enormous burden, and once again breathed more freely. It seemed as if he had quitted a world peopled with dead bodies, to return to ordinary life. He felt as if he could never weary of the noise and bustle which the roadstead and the streets presented at this moment, with the vehicles crossing and passing each other in every direction. The vast crowd jostling one another in various costumes, calling out in all kinds of idioms, swearing in every language, seemed like a material testimony in favour of the reality of his own existence, and, at least, visibly assured him that he had escaped the world of phantoms which had been revealed to him in such fearful visions.

His first impulse was to try and discover what was

best to be done, and to determine upon a particular line of conduct; but the recollection of what had so recently befallen him was still so fresh and confusing, that he resolved to dismiss it from his brain altogether, and to postpone taking any step until he had consulted Esther, in whose excellent heart, as well as in whose extreme good sense, he had the greatest confidence.

In the mean time, he continued roaming about the quays, with the hope of effectually calming his agitated feelings and his fevered brain.

We have already observed that the city of Batavia is not constructed along the sea-shore, but is separated from it by a canal, nearly three miles in length, which leads to the open roadstead. The entrance of the canal was formerly the mouth of a small river, which, by the incessant accumulation of mud and detritus it brought down in its course, formed a powerful bar.

The Dutch are celebrated for their execution of sea defences. To check the continual alluvial deposits which threatened the roadstead, and which in particular rendered communications with it more and more difficult, they had changed the course of the river, and had canalized the banks by the erection of a couple of dykes nearly two miles in length, and had otherwise regularized its course through the marshes which border the sea-shore. It was along one of these jetties that Eusebius was now directing his steps.

When he reached the extremity, his attention was aroused by the appearance of a large Malay proa getting ready for sea, so as to take advantage of the tide, in order to reach the open. This proa was a vessel about forty tons burden, of fine and well-formed lines, but having an enormous poop, flanked on either side by a platform supported by very massive wooden transoms.

The fore-deck was armed with a couple of six-pounder cannons, which, being made fast to the bow of the boat, could easily, in case the vessel were to be chased instead of chasing, be moved sternwards by passing under the poop. Each side of the proa was fitted with three two-

pounder carronades; she carried a couple of masts, a helm at either end, sails of matting, the horizontal strips being tightened by cross-pieces of bamboo.

The crew consisted of a dozen Malays. Some were engaged in fitting the helms in their places, and fastening them to the stern-posts with strong cords of rattan, whilst others, taking advantage of the proa being alongside the jetty, were embarking the last complement of stores. The captain, leaning with his back against one of the mooring-posts of the jetty, was, while overlooking all these preparations, coolly engaged in chewing his betel-leaf.

By some false manœuvre of the sailors on board, a wave struck the rudder and turned it suddenly on one side: the heavy boat, not being yet under control, rocked heavily, and the helm knocked over one of the men. The unlucky wretch, confused by the blow, had not sufficient presence of mind to catch hold of the ratan cable which answered the purpose of a rail, and fell into the sea. His comrades immediately threw some ropes after him; but as the current was very strong at this part, and was running swiftly in the direction of the open sea, he was unable to reach them, and his companions were obliged to let down the ship's boat to go to his assistance.

The captain of the proa, under whose eyes this scene had taken place, had remained so indifferent to the whole affair, that Eusebius could hardly suppose that he was really the master of the vessel, or that the unfortunate sailor, who was fast drifting out to sea to serve apparently as food for the sharks which infest the roadstead of Batavia, could belong to the crew of a man who took so slight an interest in his fate. He did not remain long in doubt, however, for, before clearing the skiff from the bales and packages which filled it, the Malays turned towards him as if awaiting orders, and did not take an oar in hand until a sign from the silent captain seemed to say to them, "Go."

Upon this, Eusebius Van den Beck began to examine this man with a little more attention. He seemed to be

about five-and-thirty years of age, was more strongly and firmly made than men of the yellow race usually are; his eyes, too, were larger and less narrow than those of his countrymen; and his nose, almost aquiline in its shape, by removing him from any resemblance to the negro, made him approximate more closely to the European. The whole character of his face presented, besides, a remarkable mixture of ferocity, boldness, and cunning.

His costume, too, was very singular. It consisted of large breeches of black silk, fastened below the knee; a kind of *vareuse* or blouse of Indian tissue, worked with brilliant-coloured flowers, covered his chest; a piece of muslin, embroidered with gold, was rolled round his head, in the form of a turban; and an ivory-handled creese, inlaid with gold, thrust into his waistband, from which hung also a little bag containing a supply of betel, completed his attire.

But what struck Eusebius as a most extraordinary circumstance was that under the sailor's shirt which the man wore, the fine and supple rings of a coat of mail were visible.

The captain, observing the attention of which he was the object, approached Eusebius with the easiest possible manner in the world, and addressing him in the purest Dutch, and with an accent which made the young man start said,—"A very clumsy fellow that, sir?"

"It was hardly the poor fellow's fault altogether, I think."

"Whether it was his fault or not, the plunge he just now took will cost me some few thousand piastres, though."

"The man was a slave, I suppose; but did you pay as much for him as you say?" asked Eusebius.

"No," said the Malay; "but it is not the less true that the rascal has almost ruined me."

"And yet captain," replied Eusebius, smiling, "that ducking which ruins you, as you say, does not seem to disturb your composure very much."

"What is the use of putting oneself out?" returned the sailor. "I am a Mussulman; what is written is

written, and no ill-temper of mine could alter it in the slightest degree; but if you require an explanation of my words, look yonder."

Eusebius looked in the direction indicated, and perceived a flotilla of Chinese junks standing out to sea.

"Look," continued the Malay, "at those scoundrelly long-tails, who have no idea the service that fellow of mine, who is about to deprive the sharks of a meal, is rendering them."

"I don't understand you," said Eusebius.

"*Pardieu!* Monsieur Van den Beck——" Eusebius started at this address. How did it happen that this Malay, whom he had never seen before, knew his name so well?

"It is clear enough; we shall lose an hour in fishing that fellow out of the water; by that time those cursed junks will be sailing away with the wind full in their sterns, and I shall have to make my thirty Lascars spend the whole night at their oars; and it is doubtful after all whether I shall be able, before night closes in, to overtake those worshippers of the god Foo."

"And why do you so particularly wish to overtake them before night-fall?"

"Why?" replied the captain, laughing with a loud, hard, metallic laugh which made Eusebius start, for it reminded him very forcibly of the doctor—"why? do you say; why, merely to satisfy myself that their merchandise has been properly stowed away in the holds, and to relieve those poor creatures of a superfluity of cargo which might impede their progress."

"Ah! ah!" said Eusebius, looking still more attentively at the captain; "you are a pirate, then, I suppose?"

"*Parbleu!* it would be quite by accident if I looked like an honest man; you would be the first who made a mistake in that respect."

"And you are not afraid of acknowledging it, of confessing it to the very first person you see, when you are still in the Dutch roadstead under the cannon of the

Government guard-boat?" said Eusebius, who was stupified at such an excess of audacity.

"In the first place," replied the Malay banteringly, "I admit it to be true; but I do so to you, and you, to use your own words, are not the very first person I have seen. Do you remember this, young gentleman?" continued the Malay, showing Eusebius the lotus-flower which the Indian woman had given him, and which had dropped from his hand as he fled away.

"If it were not madness to suppose such a thing," said Eusebius, "I should fancy you were——"

He stopped, terrified at what he was going to say. The captain burst into a loud laugh.

"You mean that I was Doctor Basilius, don't you? Eh! eh! eh! there may be some resemblance at a distance truly; but don't make yourself uneasy, I am not Doctor Basilius; Doctor Basilius is dead, quite dead. What, when one corpse is held as sufficient proof of the death of a man, three corpses are hardly enough to satisfy you? What more can you possibly want? I repeat once more that your wife's uncle is no longer in this world; and he who stands before you, who is speaking to you, whom you are looking at as if he were a spectre, entered this morning into the body of Daton Noungal, master of the bark the *Mahommedia*, and which said Daton Noungal committed suicide between two and three o'clock this very morning, because his share of the booty had been lost in gambling, an amusement which, in a moment of weakness, he had vowed to renounce for ever. I am Noungal, nothing else, for the next quarter of an hour. I shall perhaps transform myself again some day or other—a 'perhaps' which depends a little upon your own propriety of conduct, Eusebius Van den Beck."

If the Malay captain had thought fit to go on talking for another half hour longer, poor Eusebius, utterly overwhelmed by what he saw and heard, would not have had the strength to interrupt him. But Daton Noungal paused.

"What do you mean?" asked Eusebius. "Explain yourself; every word you utter is an enigma, of which I

have not the courage to ask the solution. During the four-and-twenty hours since Doctor Basilius has mixed himself up in my affairs, I hardly know whether I am myself alive, or whether I am struggling under the weight of some horrible nightmare. I doubt my own existence; I doubt others; I doubt Heaven; I doubt everything; and the vaulted skies above us seem nothing more than an immense net, under which are writhing about victims destined like myself to be the sport of supernatural events, against which human intelligence, the reasoning faculties, the exercise of the free will, are powerless."

"Grumble at your share, I advise you, and before me too. In a short time I shall be sailing on the broad ocean, and when a few hundred leagues away from this place, I shall be sharpening my beak and talons against those wicked sea-birds whose ill luck may drift them across my path, whilst M. Eusebius Van den Beck will be enjoying, to the full, the fortune which Doctor Basilius left him."

"I don't want his fortune—I repudiate it," cried Eusebius; "you never were Esther's uncle."

"Well, what does it matter if he whom people called Basilius represented him?"

"No; for if I were to accept this inheritance, I should be entering into a compact with one of the infernal powers whom I deny, but whom I am forced to acknowledge."

"What a child you are," said Daton Noungal, drawing from his breast a paper which Eusebius recognized with terror to be that to which he had affixed his signature the preceding night. "This is the agreement which unites you with whomsoever may hereafter represent Basilius. Although not written in letters of fire upon black parchment, and although it bears a government stamp instead of that of hell, a bill of exchange at the present day my young friend is the real infernal compact after all; believe me the man who happens to have put his name to a bill of exchange is no longer his own property; and if he does not pay it when it falls due, at the very hour, minute or second even, agreed upon, he becomes

the property of his creditor. Shylock was a simpleton for only asking for his pound of flesh; he should have asked a hundred and twenty pounds, a hundred and thirty, a hundred and forty, he would have been sure to have had them all. Modern usurers are not such simpletons; they ask the whole body, and it is freely given. In fact, the expression of a man's wish, transferred to paper and signed with his name, whether written with ink or blood matters little, is amply sufficient to tie his hands for the rest of his days; and are not we, you and I, I mean, irrevocably connected with each other from the very moment when, in exchange for your wife's life which I gave you, you swore to curb the natural instincts you possess, which I pretended you would not be sufficiently master of yourself to do. What! you the son of a notary not more clever than that? That is called a reciprocal contract, and is in force from the very moment either party begins to act in pursuance of it."

"But when I made that promise," said Eusebius, "I thought I made it to a man like myself; it was a fellow-creature, a being formed and fashioned as I am, with whom I thought I was engaging myself, and not with a demon."

"In other words you relied upon remaining free yourself, and upon forfeiting your word when you had obtained from your fellow-creature everything which you hoped he had it in his power to bestow; that is to say, you hoped that the man with whom you entered into the contract would not be able to compel you to keep your engagement, nor to punish you if you were to fail in keeping it. Ah! you expected to make a dupe of somebody else, my poor Eusebius; but, unfortunately for you, it will turn out very differently. If, however, to satisfy your timorous conscience, you require to be assured that I am neither the Arimane of the Persians, nor the Typhon of the Egyptians, nor the Python of the Greeks, nor the Satan of Milton, nor the Mephistopheles of Faust, nor the Guivre of the Viscontis, nor the Baphomet of the Templars, nor the Graonille, nor the Tarrasque, nor the Gargonille of the Middle Ages, nor the devil himself in fact, why I

give you my assurance on the subject at once. Besides, if you choose to doubt my word, pray do so ; but look in my shoes, look under my turban,—*vide pedes, vide caput,* and you will find neither horns nor cloven foot."

"Who are you, then?"

"A will."

"A will?"

"Yes ; a will applied to an object,—immortality."

"Of the body or of the soul?"

"Of the body, silly fellow ; the soul is immortal from its very essence, while the body is perishable."

"You are immortal, then?"

"I am not immortal, but, as it is, I have attained something like a hundred and twenty to a hundred and thirty years of age ; I should very much like to reach three centuries, for what we have seen in the world during the last hundred and twenty years is so very curious. It was this desire which led me to revive a branch of knowledge which was supposed to be extinct, and it was this desire which gave me a strength and a power of which you have already been enabled to appreciate the extent."

"And you can struggle successfully against death?" asked Eusebius, with increasing terror.

"I should think you had found that out. Listen, and you shall learn one of those thousand unknown truths which are destined to see the light in the course of ages. Death is a phantom of ignorance, it has no existence at all ; the body is the vestment of the soul, nothing more ; whenever the body is completely worn out, or seriously and irreparably injured, the soul quits its frail tenement, and leaves it, like a worthless rag, at the corner of the first place it comes to. And so, my dear young friend," added the Malay, laughing with that peculiar laugh which froze the marrow in Eusebius's bones, "I know how to change my coat before it gets threadbare, that is all."

"How can that be possible?"

"Excuse me, that *how* is the very thing I do not intend to tell you, seeing that if you were to know it you would know as much as I do myself. What you may know,

however, although I am not obliged to tell you, but still I wish you to have fair play,—what you may know, is, that whenever Eusebius Van den Beck, sickened and disgusted with his wife, Esther Mavius, shall happen to say to himself some fine day: 'What the devil could have possessed me to go in the middle of the night to hunt up Doctor Basilius, whom Heaven confound! Why the deuce should that infernal doctor have bestowed life where death had already taken up its abode?'—on that very day, when the soul of Eusebius Van den Beck wishes to quit its earthly tenement—its fresh, youthful, and unsullied body, which had a clear thirty good years of existence before it—at that very moment he will find himself become, it matters not where, an infamous bandit chief—a ruthless pirate captain—who will regard it as far from disagreeable to have to pass those same thirty years, while waiting for something better, in that self-same body of Monsieur Van den Beck."

"And so this death which was announced this morning——"

"Was only a change of locality, nothing more."

"And you will live in that manner?"

"Until ages and ages shall have passed away, I suppose; and considering that men's natural wickedness and folly very soon disgust them with life, I at least calculate upon doing so until the day of judgment."

"But," said Eusebius, "I do not belong to you yet; and now you have put me on my guard, I will take such excellent care, I promise you, that you risk having to pass the rest of your days in the skin of Daton Noungal."

"You think so, do you?" said the Malay jeeringly.

"I, faithless to Esther? Never! never!"

"Not so fast, your privileges are larger than you fancy."

"How so?"

"The infidelities of the body don't count at all; those you will only have to pay for with your fortune, which is but fair; the infidelity of the heart and mind will alone be taken into account, and for that, and that only will your body be answerable."

"In that case I am perfectly easy," said Eusebius, endeavouring to laugh in his turn.

"Very good; will you or will you not accept the doctor's inheritance?"

"I will accept it," said Eusebius resolutely; "rich and happy I shall be able more readily to resist the infernal temptations which doubtlessly you will invoke against me. A portion of it I will employ in good works; I will place Heaven on my side, and Heaven will prevail against you, who, despite your assertions to the contrary, cannot but derive your infernal power from hell."

"Try," returned the captain, "try, and may you enjoy yourself: life is short, your own, particularly, is not destined to be of very long duration; try that it be a good one. Good bye; until we meet again, Eusebius." At these words he turned his back upon the young man, as if he had other matters of greater importance to attend to than a continuation of the conversation, and made a sign to his sailors, who had taken their comrade on board, and had finished getting the vessel ready for sea. At this sign four men laid their oars in the water and rowed towards the jetty.

The Malay chief threw his legs over the parapet, seized hold of a cable which was fastened to a buoy anchored at some distance, and when he found himself just above the ship's boat he let go the rope, and fell on his feet in the midst of the sailors, who immediately rowed back towards the vessel.

When he reached the proa, he slowly ascended the ship's side by means of the rope-ladders fastened to the side, gave his orders for departure, the rattan ropes let loose the matting sails, the freshening breeze bellied them out, and the proa, yielding to the movement imparted to it, doubled the jetty. As he passed in front of the extremity of the stockade, Daton Noungal, who had taken his place on the poop of the vessel, gave, in token of adieu to Eusebius who seemed fastened to the same place, one of his sinister laughs.

It was not until the little vessel, which seemed gifted

with wings, was lost in the horizon, that Eusebius thought of returning to his home. He reached it in a state of nervous excitement difficult to describe. Fever seized him the same day, and a physician, whom Esther had sent for during the night, declared that it was almost impossible the patient would be able to struggle for more than three days against the furious attack of delirium to which he was a prey.

CHAPTER VII.

THE reader will not have forgotten the legal personage who had announced to Eusebius Van den Beck and to Esther Mavius the death of their uncle, Doctor Basilius. This legal gentleman was the managing clerk of the notary Maës, who lived in the Place de Weltevreden, one of the best localities in Batavia.

The notary Maës was an original, by no means deficient in certain distinctive qualities of mind and body, and well deserving the trouble involved in a few lines of descriptive drawing in the delineation of his physical and moral characteristics. Physically, Maës was tall, stout, and full-faced, with the height of a tambour-major, but with a face as beardless as a child's, a nose *à la Roxalane*, and a complexion of the lily and the rose, forming the most curious contrast with his Herculean stature. Morally, M. Maës was double; that is to say, there were two men in the same skin. One of these two men was M. Maës the notary; the other was M. Maës the individual.

Nothing could be more quiet, more methodical, more punctual, more orderly, better regulated, than M. Maës, the notary. Had a client required his presence at four o'clock in the morning, he would not have thought of leaving his house except in his black coat, white cravat,

and fresh gloves, in the strictest conformity with the exigencies of Batavian requirements.

No one could ever remember to have seen him walking about on foot in the streets after sunset.

In the discharge of his professional duties he never smiled; his face remained grave, and exhibited always something of a last will and testament in its expression, even when the subject under discussion happened to be a contract of marriage. He never spoke to his clients except in the third person, and adroitly turned the conversation whenever it showed a tendency to wander to subjects strictly beyond the professional matter for which he had been summoned.

But precisely at six o'clock in the evening M. Maës laid aside, with a deep sigh of intense relief, his dress, his stiffness of manner, and his serious-looking physiognomy. A smile of satisfaction illumined his ample face; he threw off his black coat and trousers, in which he felt so hampered, with an eagerness which rendered Madame Maës—a modest-looking, methodical woman, although somewhat lively and petulantly-disposed—immeasurably unhappy, donned a suit of white jean, frisked about in the liveliest manner, as far as his heavy weight would allow him to do so, drank four or five glasses of ginger-beer, and subsided into Maës purely and simple; that is to say, a joyous companion, who not only did not disdain the intimate enjoyments of a pipe of opium after his dinner, but who ventured sometimes into the narrower streets of the town, under the well-known thatched roof of Meester Cornelis even, and who regularly finished his evenings in the Chinese Campong, at the little theatre in the *Voyang Tchiva* Place, where evil-minded people pretended he was attracted far less by the study of the dramatic literature of the celestial empire, than by the intimate manners and customs of the pretty Malay females, who furnished the theatre in question with its most seductive actors and its liveliest supernumeraries. M. Maës, at the moment we have introduced him upon the stage of our story, had not yet reached the joyous phase of his daily existence.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon; he was sitting in his study, at a desk covered with files and bundles of papers, which he was examining with a carefulness calculated to inspire his clients with the most perfect confidence in him; only every now and then his enormous body writhed uncomfortably in his black coat, his neck moved nervously in his white cravat, as if neck and bust were impatient to get rid of their trammels; and then, before returning to his papers, his eyes gazed, with a melancholy expression, upon a large regulator in a mahogany case, which moved with the most despairing slowness and monotony. The door suddenly opened.

"If you please, sir," said one of Maître Maës's clerks, who did not enter, but remained in the adjoining room, which led into the notary's study, "Madame Van den Beck-Mavius would like to speak to you, if it would not interrupt you too much."

"Show her in, show her in, William Ryck," replied Maître Maës; "we mustn't keep clients waiting, and especially lady clients," he added, with a very significant smile.

And then, perceiving that the young man might interpret his remark somewhat unfavourably, Maître Maës added, as a corrective to it, "Especially when they are clients of such high respectability as Madame Van den Beck-Mavius. Show her in at once."

The notary glanced hastily at a small Venetian glass hanging over a crimson silk sofa, to satisfy himself that the impatience which he had just before been manifesting had in no way disarranged the folds of his cravat and the general harmony of his toilet.

The clerk introduced Madame Van den Beck. Her recent illness, the anxiety which her husband's state caused her, left their traces upon Esther's features. Her face was pale; but was not on that account less pretty, nay, rather more so indeed. The notary ceremoniously handed her a chair.

"I must in the first place begin, madam," he observed,

in his most measured tones, "by inquiring after the health of M. Van den Beck."

"My husband is better; fortunately for him, the oracles, generally speaking, upon which one can least rely, are those belonging to the faculty, for the doctor attending him threw me at first into the greatest despair."

Maître Maës smiled; Madame Van den Beck continued: "Youth and a strong constitution have triumphed over his disease; and we are fortunately now relieved from that terrible delirium during which my husband was disturbed by the most horrible visions. This state of feverish excitement has been succeeded by a torpor more alarming still; but we hope, however, to overcome even this."

"I suppose," interrupted the notary, who thought he had conceded sufficiently to the requirements which politeness demanded of him, and who, considering the advanced hour, was anxious to attend to business matters forthwith —"I suppose Madame Van den Beck-Mavius has favoured me with a visit for the purpose of talking over the inheritance of her late uncle, Doctor Basilius."

"Certainly, sir; for your clerk, who called upon me yesterday, alluded to a codicil containing certain conditions, which might possibly, in some way or other, affect the disposition of the property, a general outline of which you have already given me."

"Precisely, madam; but let us begin by the beginning; and allow me, consequently, to lay before you the result of the inventory, which, in accordance with the requirements of the law, I have had drawn up of the real and personal property left by the late Dr. Basilius."

"If you please," replied Madame Van den Beck, bowing.

"I have the honour to acquaint you, madam," continued the notary, "that the inheritance is considerable—more so than you and your husband can reasonably have expected. I find, on the credit side of the account, a sum amounting to one million five hundred florins; while on the *debit* side, owing to the extreme order and regu-

larity which he observed, Doctor Basilius does not appear to have owed a single halfpenny.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Esther. "How delighted I shall be to see my poor Eusebius rich, and in the enjoyment of luxuries which, like all poor people, we have envied at a distance, without ever hoping for a nearer acquaintance."

"Add, madam," said Maître Maës, "that your satisfaction is doubled at the happiness of enriching your husband, since the inheritance is derived from or through you."

Poor Esther's pallid cheeks flushed momentarily at this remark.

"I acknowledge, sir," she said, "that I love my poor husband very fondly, and he has given me very many proofs of his own affection."

The notary cast a glance at the clock, and seemed to regret having deviated, although merely by a simple phrase, from the straightforward path before him.

"I have the honour," he continued, "to hand you a copy of the inventory; "you will perceive that the fortune left by Doctor Basilius, and which is now your own, consists,—

"Firstly.—Of a plantation in the district of Buitenzorg, valued at 600,000 florins.

"Secondly.—Of 400,000 florins deposited with the house of Van den Bruck, one of the best firms in Batavia.

"Thirdly.—Of 230,000 florins in cash, found at the lodgings of the deceased, and transported to my own house.

"Fourthly and lastly, of various articles of merchandise, some of which have also been conveyed to my own house —others to storehouses——"

Madame Van den Beck interrupted the notary. "I cannot suppose, sir, that the inventory is otherwise than perfectly regular. Let us proceed to the conditional codicil to which you have referred."

This formal demand seemed to embarrass Maître Maës in a very singular manner; he who had accustomed himself to follow with such scrupulous exactitude the

precept of Horace—*Ad eventum festina*—he coughed, leisurely wiped his forehead with his cambric pocket-handkerchief, raised his spectacles, which he wore so long as he represented the notary, not only as an ornament to his face, but as forming part of his professional costume, and finished by saying, as he played with the gold chain of his watch,—

"I have the honour to inform Madame Van den Beck-Mavius that I should prefer awaiting the restoration to health of her husband, M. Van den Beck, before communicating the very singular and exceptional clause in the will of the late Doctor Basilius—a clause, moreover, which solely affects M. Van den Beck himself, if not in its effects, at least in the production of the result; M. Van den Beck, being the natural and legal guardian of the legatee, it seems possible, practicable, and unobjectionable to place the hereinbefore-mentioned legatee in possession of her deceased uncle's property, and to allow the codicil to remain undisturbed, that codicil containing nothing of very urgent moment, particularly during M. Van den Beck's illness. Upon his recovery, M. Van den Beck will communicate it to his wife, after having first acquainted himself with its contents."

"Really, sir, you perplex me exceedingly; and yet it is not mere curiosity which induces me to persist in my present request; for it is possible that Eusebius may be unable for a long time to come to resume the direction of our affairs. Besides, after the revelations which he has made in the height of his delirium, there are certain episodes in his connection with my uncle which I consider it most prudent to avoid alluding to with him. Speak, I implore you, and inform me at once of the contents of this singular codicil."

"So singular, in fact, madam," repeated the notary, "so very singular, that I hardly know how I can express the testator's idea in a proper manner, without failing in the respect which I owe to you, and which I should owe also to myself, if," he added, smiling, "it had already struck six o'clock."

"At all events, sir," replied Esther, endeavouring to force a smile, "you have not very long to wait, for there is six striking now."

At this moment, and just as the last stroke had ceased vibrating in the notary's study, the door was suddenly thrown open, and a little woman rushed in like a tempest. It was the highly respectable Madame Maës.

"Well, what are you thinking of to-day?" she exclaimed, not observing that her husband was engaged; "it is at least ten minutes since the clock struck at the governor's house—the clerks have left the office—the ginger-beer is fresh and cool. What is it that keeps you from doing as others have done?"

"Wilhelmina," he said, "this is Madame Van den Beck, to whom I have the honour of presenting you. Madame Van den Beck, Madame Maës."

The latter responded by a profound courtesy, in acknowledgment of Esther's salutation. Madame Maës was a very singular counterpart of her husband; she was as enormous as himself; but it was not in height that her osseous frame had developed itself, but in breadth; and in this respect she had acquired such a prodigious amplification of bulk, that there were very few doors she was capable of entering otherwise than sideways.

Her little eyes were bright and sparkling, her nose a mere dot in the centre of her face, her mouth large and furnished with thirty-two beautiful teeth, which she took every opportunity of displaying, gave a singular appearance to her whole physiognomy, which was materially aggravated by nature having liberally bestowed upon her those masculine hirsute advantages in which her husband was deficient, by covering her face with a white down, which, had it not been for the brick-coloured tones of her cheeks and nose, would have made her resemble a hairy cactus.

The activity of this unwieldy lady formed a singular contrast with her prodigious bulk; she was very proud of it, and attributed her activity, or rather her liveliness of disposition, to her origin, which she asserted to be French,

inasmuch as she was born at Liége, at the time when the Walloon Provinces formed one of the departments of France.

The nationality which Wilhelmina, as her husband invariably called her, ascribed to herself, justified her vivacity of character, which was the more remarkable, as her bulk in no way countenanced it. This vivacity was but little suited to the phlegmatic and passive attitude which M. Maës preserved from eight in the morning to six in the evening; and as, out of gratitude very likely for her adopted country, Madame Maës had grafted upon her natural liveliness of disposition a devotion and strictness essentially Dutch, she could no more understand the gay and epicurean Maës, whom she had in her possession from six in the evening to eight in the morning, than the stiff and formal Maës, who, rebounding like a spring, escaped her clutches from eight in the morning until six in the evening.

M. Maës, however, appeared delighted at his wife's presence, which put a stop to the communication which Madame Van den Beck required of him, and which appeared so difficult for him to afford her.

"You are right, Wilhelmina," he said; "the hour at which my labours cease has in fact arrived, and those labours are so prostrating under this burning sky that I confess, madam," he added, turning towards Esther, "that I am as punctual in resuming as I am in relinquishing them. If Madame Van den Beck will allow me," continued M. Maës, "we will postpone to another day our present conversation, and I will ask her to be good enough to inform me of the hour most agreeable to her, for the signature of the necessary documents."

"But I repeat, sir," Esther replied, "that so long as we are in ignorance of this unfortunate codicil which seems so difficult for you to produce, I do not know whether we can avail ourselves of this inheritance."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Maës, "have you not yet told Madame Van den Beck about her old rascal of an uncle? Well! I could not help thinking she

seemed very calm and indifferent for a woman placed as she is."

"Allow me to observe, my dear Wilhelmina," replied M. Maës, putting on his spectacles, which he had already placed beside him on the table; "allow me to observe, I say, that this is a conversation entirely about business in which your intervention is quite unnecessary."

"And allow *me* to observe, sir," replied Wilhelmina—her voice gradually ascending the gamut of shrillness; "that the hour of business is past, and that I insist that this young lady, who seems entitled to the greatest consideration, should learn how far the villany of certain men can extend. Besides, I warn you of one thing, that if you don't explain the whole affair to her, I will do so myself."

"Well," said M. Maës, resigning himself to his fate; "this communication really appears to me a matter of such little importance, that it would perhaps be better if it were made merely in ordinary conversation than through the medium of a legal functionary. However, I should be very happy to be allowed to precede the communication I have to make, by a few questions which I will beg Madame Van den Beck to be good enough to forgive me if they seem indiscreet; the indiscretion I may be guilty of will, however, be perfectly justified by the terms of the codicil."

"Speak, sir," said Esther, not without a certain impatience of manner.

"Allow me to ask you, madam, in the first place, whether your marriage with M. Eusebius Van den Beck was one of affection?"

"Entirely of affection, sir; we were both equally poor, and were completely ignorant of what had become of our uncle, Basil Mavius, and so poor that when we were betrothed we were only able to exchange rings of silver." And holding out her left hand to the notary, she showed him the ring she wore, which was simply of the metal which ranks second in estimation.

M. Maës's glance was sufficient to include the hand

as well as the ring, and he found the one as beautiful as the other was simple.

"You see it," added Esther, smiling; "and yet I would not change this ring, which is hardly worth a florin, for the diamond of the Great Mogul."

"And your husband has the fellow to that?"

"The precise counterpart."

"And he values his ring as much as you do yours?"

"I could swear it."

"So far that is good," said the notary; "and now let me ask how long you have been married, madam?"

"Eighteen months, sir."

"And during those eighteen months—and this is the nervous part of the affair, but you will presently perceive its importance—during these eighteen months you can answer for your husband's fidelity?"

"As I can for my own life, sir!" exclaimed Esther, unhesitatingly.

"Happy woman!" said Madame Maës; "you will hardly believe that before the first month of our marriage was over, that monster's conduct," and she pointed at M. Maes, "made me very unhappy."

"Wilhelmina, Wilhelmina! said M. Maes, "if you interrupt us at every moment in this way, we shall never finish."

Then, turning to Esther, he continued: "So that, madam, so perfectly satisfied are you from your experience of the past, that you have no feeling of uneasiness with regard to the future?"

"None whatever."

"Very good; you must know, then, madam——"

"Yes, poor dear, you must know that your uncle was a scoundrel, a libertine who lived in the most shameless manner without the slightest attempt at concealment."

"Wilhelmina!" said M. Maës.

"Don't attempt to stop me, sir," said Wilhelmina; "you are no better than he was. Ah! poor dear little thing," she continued, taking hold of Madame Van den Beck's hands and lifting up her small grey eyes to the ceiling, "if you did but know the abominable country

you have come to live in, and if you could only form an idea of the degree of irreligion and immorality which those are guilty of who reside here, and M. Maës at the head of them all, why——"

"What is it you mean, sir?" said Esther, impatient to become acquainted with the famous codicil which had given rise to such a lengthened dissertation.

"The fact is," said Wilhelmina; "that your monster of an uncle, since you must know all about it, kept a perfect harem in his house, for people say there were more than twenty women living there."

"No more than three, I assure you," interrupted M. Maës. "It must be admitted, however, that they were all very beautiful, all three of them."

"You hear him!"

"And my uncle, I suppose, has left a part of his fortune to those three persons. Well, that is only very natural; my uncle owed me nothing, and yet, owing me nothing, has left me more than wealthy. Gratitude prevents me expressing one word of blame about his conduct, or of exercising the slightest control over his generosity to others."

"You dear angel!" exclaimed Madame Maës, embracing Esther, "what delicacy of feeling, what goodness of heart!—is it not the abomination of desolation to see beings as good and pure as we are, delivered over to the vile passions of such creatures? But it is not that, my dear child; were it only that, it would be one of those light afflictions which must be submitted to without a murmur, unhappy victims that we are; no, no, it is far worse than you imagine."

"For pity's sake, explain yourself, madam."

"You will hardly believe," continued Wilhelmina, to whom her husband seemed to have transferred the continuation of the conversation, "that that infernal Basilius,—who, by-the-by, looked like a thorough scoundrel,—has left by his will an encouragement to evil-living, a premium upon the perversity of those three unfortunate creatures."

Esther turned towards M. Maës, trusting that a few words from him would put an end to his wife's prolixity.

"He has promised the third of your fortune to any one of the three who may succeed in making herself mistress of his affections," replied the notary hesitatingly; "that is the great secret, madam."

"Of whose affections?" asked Esther.

"Of your husband's; that is the monstrous part of the whole affair, my poor child; no one but a man could have had such an abominable idea."

"To me it only appears very absurd," replied M. Maës, "especially with reference to those three women."

"How do you mean, to those three women?" said Esther.

"Why, my darling, if these three women succeed in winning your husband's affections, one after the other, or all three together, you are not only deceived, humiliated, sacrificed, but more than that,—robbed of your fortune."

"Is this true, sir?" asked Esther, hesitating to believe the singular terms of the codicil which M. Maës had had so much difficulty in explaining.

"Alas! madam, nothing more so," replied the notary, throwing open his arms with a gesture of despair, and bowing his head.

"But you will institute legal proceedings, my dear Madame Van den Beck," cried Wilhelmina; "for the honour of the holy institution of marriage, you must do so; and the tribunals will deal with that odious codicil as it deserves to be dealt with; it will be demolished, annihilated, reduced to mere waste paper."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta, ta!" cried M. Maës, in his turn; "legal proceedings, indeed! has not that devil of a doctor provided for everything? Does not the codicil declare, that in case any dispute should arise, the will itself is to be null and void, and the whole fortune is to go to the government? Renounce fifteen hundred thousand florins! —you are speaking very much at your ease, Madame Maës."

"Alas! sir," said Esther, "it is not, I assure you, the

enormous amount of the fortune which tempts me, it is the dread of misery which makes me decide. Eusebius is now ill, very ill; and I confess, that had it not been for this inheritance which has so marvellously befallen us, our indigence is so extreme that I should be compelled to leave his side and to solicit from public charity the attention which I should myself be unable to bestow upon him. I am deeply distressed at the scandal which this unfortunate codicil causes, but it in no way alarms me. The affection which Eusebius entertains for me is unalterable; I know his heart, and feel convinced that no one but myself will ever find a place there."

"Poor woman, what innocence!" cried Madame Maës, as she removed with her finger a tear which was trickling from the corner of her eye. M. Maës coughed. "You accept, then?" asked the notary.

"I do, sir."

"And you act wisely;—there are so many persons to fall in love with in this world, that three exceptions don't make much difference."

"M. Maës," said Wilhelmina, "you are the most immoral of men; respect at least this artless young creature."

"Well, is it not just seven o'clock, madam, and consequently what harm can there be in joking over this very droll idea of Doctor Basilius?"

"Droll! droll!" cried Madame Maës, "the monster, he thinks the idea droll!"

"I have only one final request to make of you, sir," said Esther.

"Pray mention it, madam," returned the notary, resuming his gravity.

"What has become of the three women of whom you have been speaking?"

"I am perfectly ignorant, madam; when I presented myself at Doctor Basilius's house on the day succeeding the fatal event, they had disappeared."

CHAPTER VIII.

The illness of Eusebius Van den Beck, like all nervous disorders, was very protracted and painful. The mental excitement with which it had commenced, the fever which had succeeded it, and which had occasioned those wild delirious delusions which had so terrified Esther, were followed by a state of languor which was no less alarming than the other phases of his disorder had been.

His intellectual faculties seemed, if not extinguished, at least deadened; the terrible crisis which he had undergone had deprived him of memory and imagination. He spoke very rarely, and during the greater part of the time he did not even seem to be aware of what was passing around him.

Of all his slumbering sensations, one only seemed at any time to show any sign of existence; it was that which Esther's presence produced at his bedside. His love for his wife was increased in proportion to the loss his other feelings had undergone. Esther seemed to have become the guardian angel which retained in his body, so undermined by suffering, the soul, ever ready to take its hasty flight.

He remained for hours together with his hands resting in her hands, his eyes fixed upon her eyes; and when Esther, by a sign, by a look, by a gesture, expressed the affection with which her heart was overflowing, Eusebius's look, ordinarily dull and fixed, brightened up with unusual animation, and which, without his lips having breathed a single syllable, reminded his young wife of the sweet and fervent vows of the days of their early affection.

If, on the contrary, Esther was obliged to quit her husband's bedside, Eusebius became sad, uneasy, unhappy; if her absence was prolonged, he recovered his voice, after

unheard-of efforts, and with his eyes streaming with tears called to her in the deepest distress. When she returned to take her place by his bedside, he gazed at her with the most feverish anxiety, and then, as if he doubted the testimony of his own eyes, his hands wandered over her face, her shoulders, her arms, and he did not recover his composure until a few tender words, or a caress, had sufficiently proved to the poor fellow that it was really and truly his wife he had beside him.

To the past,—to that terrible night on which he had gone to claim Doctor Basilius's assistance,—to the latter's death,—to the wealthy inheritance to which he and his wife had succeeded, not the slightest allusion was ever made. Eusebius had, or appeared to have forgotten everything; he did not even seem to perceive the changes which that inheritance had wrought in their private affairs; he availed himself of the services of the numerous servants who surrounded him since his illness, as if he had never been accustomed to do without them; and he testified no surprise at observing the blackened mud walls of the hovel in which they had lived being replaced by the gilded wainscotings and the rich hangings of the hotel in the Place du Roi, an hotel in which Madame Van den Beck had been installed since her interview with the notary Maës.

It is unnecessary to observe that the affection and tender solicitude which Eusebius had shown on his wife's behalf, when he had been in such mortal terror of losing her, were now equally lavished by the latter upon her husband. The best physicians in Batavia had been summoned to his aid. Wearied at the absence of improvement in her husband's state of health, she made them meet in consultation, and begged them to come to some decision as to the nature of the languor which threatened to finish what the fever had begun, or, at the very least, threatened to reduce Eusebius to a state of idiotcy as lamentable as death itself.

The fact of having transferred their services from Europe to India, had in no way induced the disciples of Esculapius to forget any of the traditions of their craft,

and consequently the Batavian doctors, with reference to the patient's state, differed in opinion from each other as completely as those of Paris, London, or Amsterdam could have done.

At first they were divided into two opposite camps. Two declared that nothing could be done, and that Eusebius must be given up. Two others gave Esther to hope that her husband's recovery would be prompt and certain. A fifth remained silent; his voice might have made the balance incline either in favour of life or death. But in spite of the urgent representations which were made to him, he contented himself by remarking that the patient might recover if he did not become worse; while, on the contrary, if he became worse, he would not answer for the consequences.

With regard to the treatment to be followed, that was quite another matter. One advised the strongest doses of bark to be given; another asserted that the malady would yield to the employment of opiates; a third recommended bleeding and leeches; a fourth regular diet and excessive purgings; the fifth, who had made that very sensible remark, that if the patient did not get better there was everything to be apprehended, whilst on the contrary, if he improved in health there was everything to be hoped for, stoutly affirmed that by combining the use of *carduus benedictus* with the sulphurous baths of Panghéremgo there were at least as many chances of success as of failure.

The physicians left poor Esther, on the consultation breaking up, nearly in the same idiotic state as her husband. Her isolated and abandoned position was complete.

Her husband's state of health had so affected her own health and spirits that she had never attempted to make any acquaintances; besides, the evil reputation of Doctor Basilius, the scandal which was aroused by his extraordinary codicil, had descended upon his heirs; and their new neighbours of Weltevreden did not look upon Eusebius and Esther in any more favourable light than

they had been regarded by the Chinese of the poor district in which they had resided in their misery.

The notary Maës was the only person of any position in the city with whom Madame Van den Beck continued on a friendly footing. He had, as far as his nature or disposition allowed him, shown himself kind and considerate towards her in every way; and before the proper courts had placed her, as her husband's representative, in possession of the doctor's wealth, he had generously offered to advance them whatever money they might require in their distressed position.

Esther, consequently, determined to go and consult the notary Maës. It was one o'clock in the day when she presented herself at his office. She found him cravatted, constrained, stiff, grave, and serious, as he had shown himself during the first quarter of an hour of their former interview.

She explained the motive of her visit. The notary listened to her unmoved. "I see no great reason for your anxiety, madam," he replied, in a tone as full of conviction as that of the physicians had been who were the most impressed with the infallibility of their own diagnosis; "the state of M. Van den Beck is serious, I admit, but, happily, Providence"—and the religious notary raised his eyes to Heaven — "Providence, madam, has placed the remedy close to the disorder."

"The remedy? Oh, if you know any remedy which can bring my poor husband relief, speak, M. Maës, I implore you; and even were it necessary to sacrifice the whole fortune which my uncle has left, that remedy shall not be left unemployed."

"There is no occasion to sacrifice anything, madam; on the contrary, far from incurring any loss, the remedy I allude to will double the extent of your property, or, rather, the amount of your capital; far from being a cause of ruin, it will be a source of prosperity and wealth, and will make both of you the wealthiest residents in Batavia."

"But tell me what this remedy is?"

"Work," said M. Maës gravely.

"Work," repeated Esther, astonished.

"Yes, madam; M. Van den Beck's brain is suffering because it has nothing to occupy it, in the same way as a stomach suffers when it is not supplied with the food which is necessary for its support. To condemn his mind to live upon itself, limited to a purely intellectual diet, will as surely induce his death, as if you were to sentence him to a mere physical diet. Restore him to the labours the anxieties, the perplexities of occupation, which are the real stimulants of life, and you will see him resume his former health and strength. Let him occupy himself, and he will certainly live."

"You cannot think of such a thing," said Esther; "my husband can hardly bring two ideas together, and is unable to pronounce four words consecutively."

"That doesn't matter, all that will naturally come with looking after his own interests, my dear lady. It is precisely with work as with gambling: as soon as one of the dice has shown its face, the fever of play takes possession of the player; the desire of gain shakes him just as he shakes the box which contains his fortune or his ruin. Work, Madame Van den Beck, is the universal panacea, the surest and truest of all; it is that which will restore your husband to health. I give you an instance of it in my own case: if I were not to work, I should blow my brains out; it is work alone which makes me forget the melancholy side of life, and which consoles me for the many heart-aches from which we are all sufferers."

"I should think, sir," said Esther, interrupting him, "that with Madame Maës beside you, that is a kind of suffering from which you are entirely exempt."

The notary could not prevent himself colouring, but was not otherwise put out.

"Yes," he resumed, without pausing to notice her observation; "yes, indeed, work triumphs over the bitterest vexations and annoyances as over the most distressing physical sufferings; and although I am weighed down beneath the burden, and still more by the duties

of my charge, for duties are so distressingly difficult to discharge in this burning climate," he added parenthetically, pointing with his hand to the windows, which were protected from the rays of the sun by thick matting; "yet it is the only thing which enables me to exist—the only thing for which I live. I feel that if I were to be deprived of work, I should die from suffocation—from sheer want of the necessary elements to maintain the feverish activity of my mind. Rely upon what I say, and try its effects with M. Van den Beck: stimulate the inactivity of his brain by a proper regard for his own interests, so that, once restored to himself, he should attend to some kind of occupation or another, it don't matter what it is: let him buy a plantation, or take a house in Batavia, or speculate in coffee, or invest in rice, or turn sugar refiner, or distil arrack, or sell indigo, tea, spices, it matters little what, provided he sells something, and, like myself, attends to business night and day; and before long you will see him as stout and healthy as I am."

Madame Van den Beck looked at the colossal notary with amazement, and could not help asking herself whether, if such a transformation of her husband's appearance were really to take place, it would not be one of those cases where the remedy would be worse than the disorder. "Yet I thought, sir," she ventured to observe, "that when the evening arrived, you allowed yourself some relaxation after the labours of the day."

"A mistake, madam, a complete mistake," returned M. Maës; "and I cannot but perceive that you judge me as the vulgar herd judges me. Because M. Maës, owing to the position he occupies and to the society he receives, is obliged to keep an abundant and luxurious table, people say M. Maës is fond of good living. A complete mistake! They do not know," continued the notary, assuming a melancholy attitude, "how I am obliged to sacrifice my tastes. People say, 'Oh! the notary Maës drives about like a nabob in a carriage with four horses as soon as it gets dark.' But no, the notary Maës does

not drive about at all; he merely goes to look at a plantation which the owner is desirous of mortgaging. People say, 'The notary Maës frequents the Campong too much; he is seen rather more frequently behind the scenes of the Chinese theatre than at church.' Alas! madam, the vulgar herd knows not that it is my unfortunate occupation which obliges me to do so."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Certainly, madam; for it is there that I am most likely to meet with the rascals I have to do with; for you are probably not aware that our merchants carry on very important transactions with the inhabitants of the celestial empire. It is from pure devotion to business, it is from an over-anxiety for the interests of my clients, that I pass night after night at table with those rascals, with their turned-up eyes, drinking triou and arrack with them until they disappear under the table; and all that simply because it is only when they have a little brandy or liquor in their paunches that one has any chance of getting the better of those crafty scoundrels. These, however, madam, are merely the duties imposed upon me by my profession, disagreeable obligations, which are bitter trials to me in the midst of the life of enjoyment which I derive from the labour I so much delight in." And M. Maës seized hold of his pen with both hands, and raised it to Heaven.

"You begin to convince me," said Esther, with an imperceptible smile.

"That was my object, madam," was the confident reply.

"But," continued his fair client, "how are we to obtain a similar result from such a confirmed invalid as my husband, M. Maës?"

"There are a thousand ways of doing so, madam."

"Give me only one."

"By showing him the result of labour—gold."

"Gold?"

"Yes; poor M. Van den Beck has never had much of it in his life! Give him a few pieces of gold to look at,

to feel; say to him, 'Eusebius, this is ours, I know; but there are some who wish to deprive us of it, who dispute our title to it.' At the very first syllable, if he belongs to the human race at all, you will see his look brighten; at the second, that look will shed a light upon his brain, and from that moment he will recover his intellects and his strength; and at the third, he will be cured."

"But if I am to tell him that our quiet possession of this fortune is menaced, I must tell him all about the codicil."

"Sooner or later he will be obliged to know it."

"Oh! never, sir,—never!"

"In that case, then, invent some other means of arousing him, if you do not want him to sink from this torpid state into death."

Poor Esther was so overwhelmed, so undecided, and so worn out by her hesitations as to the proper course to adopt, that she returned home resolved to try the notary's specific, and to awaken the benumbed intelligence, to arouse the slumbering faculties of her unhappy husband.

One day, when Eusebius had remained for some time passively leaning his head upon his wife's bosom, and when the latter, seated upon the bed and holding the invalid's hand in her own, fancied she had observed that there was more tranquillity in her husband's face, and more expression in his look than had been the case up to that moment, she resolved to speak.

"Eusebius, dearest," she began, "do you know we are very rich?"

Eusebius took no notice, but with an indifferent air began to play with the silky curls of her beautiful hair.

"We have no longer to dread the return of the misery from which we have suffered so much. Look here," she added, throwing a handful of gold upon the bed, "we have thousands of times as much gold as what you have there before your eyes."

Eusebius cast a glance in the direction of the gold, and, as if its weight annoyed him, pushed it aside

mechanically with his knee, and it rolled upon the carpet.

Then, as his wife's pretty face bent over him, he kissed her on the forehead.

"Eusebius," she continued, "are you not happy at being rich?—are you not proud to see your wife dressed so beautifully?"

Eusebius looked at Esther with the fondest affection.

"Don't you know, sir, that I shall never again venture to present myself before you in the wretched clothes I used to wear? And yet it almost seems as if you cared for me less in my present dress than you used to do."

"Was it not thus that I first saw you?—that I first loved you so fondly?" he replied, responding for the first time to his wife's thought; "were you not beautiful then, and did you not love me before you were rich?"

"You still love me, then?" said Esther, already observing the success, though but slight, which had attended the line of conduct suggested by M. Maes, and encouraged by the expression of affection in her husband's face to make a further attempt.

"Yes," replied Eusebius, "and more than I have ever loved you."

"I rely upon your affection," said Esther, "and yet sometimes I am afraid that it may fail me."

Eusebius shrugged up his shoulders. "Impossible," he replied.

"I hope so," she continued; "and yet it seems as if the deepest and truest feelings must, like all things on this earth, have an end."

"Who says that?—who says that?" cried Eusebius, turning very pale.

"A man who possessed a profound knowledge of all things, an intimate acquaintance with his fellow-men; he, in fact, to whom we owe our present happiness."

"You refer to Dr. Basilius?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" groaned Eusebius, starting convulsively up in his bed, seizing his head between his hands as if to check

the rush of blood to his brain ; "it is true, then, it is not a dream, about that Doctor Basilius?"

"It is true that his skill saved me, and it is equally true that we have been enriched through his kindness," said Esther, who, observing the agitation into which her remark had thrown her husband, trembled at the idea of having gone too far.

But Eusebius was no longer capable of listening to her ; at the doctor's name he had become as pale as a ghost, his haggard eyes lost their returning intelligence, his tongue almost refused its utterance, and it seemed as if the fearful delirium, which had been the first stage of his malady, was about to return.

"Doctor Basilius?" he said ; "yes, yes, I remember it all now, the Malay dagger, the compact, the three corpses, the young Dutch girl, the negress, and that woman with the awful eyes,—eyes which pierced the heart with the cold thrill of a knife. It is all true, then ! I have not been dreaming ; I saw it all—I saw it all. Help, Esther, don't leave me, don't leave me a minute ; do you hear? remain always leaning against my shoulder, pressed closely against my heart ; if you do not, that man with the fiendish laugh will come and separate us."

And the unhappy fellow, seizing his wife in his arms, pressed her convulsively in his embrace as he had done in that night of the terrible storm and fearful agony of mind, when he thought he had lost her for ever and when the doctor had restored her to life.

His frantic gestures were accompanied by incoherent exclamations and wild ravings. Esther no longer dreaded delirium simply, but madness !

"For Heaven's sake, darling," she said, covering his face and hands with kisses, "calm yourself."

But, instead of becoming calmer, he trembled convulsively in her arms, and to her horror she saw his hair bristle on his head, and the cold sweat start in beads upon his brow.

"No, no," he cried, "there is only one way of avoiding him ; to go away, to leave this cursed country, peopled

with spectres and phantoms who wish to snatch you from me, my own dear love; oh! let us go away, let us go away." And with a powerful effort darting out of bed, and dragging Esther with him, Eusebius fell, fainting, in the middle of the room. Esther, imagining he was dead. screamed out for assistance, but fortunately no one came; and at the end of a quarter of an hour Eusebius opened his eyes.

This terrible crisis was the commencement of his recovery.

CHAPTER IX.

When Eusebius recovered his senses he was calmer; but his departure from the island had become a fixed idea with him, far stronger than any other.

Esther, far from opposing her husband's wish, declared she was ready to follow him to the end of the world as soon as he should be strong enough to bear the voyage; and this prospect worked that miracle in Eusebius which medicine had been powerless to effect. In fact, under the influence of what had now become a fixed idea, that upon the improvement of his own health would depend his early or deferred departure, the invalid rallied far more speedily than could have been expected.

In the course of a very few days, Eusebius, who during the last six weeks had been confined to his bed, was able to take two or three turns up and down his room, leaning upon his wife's arm; the nourishment, too, which he took gradually increased his strength, so that at the end of several days more he was able to take short drives in a carriage.

Not once since the day of the great crisis in his illness had he pronounced the name of Doctor Basilius, although

he had never since that day ceased thinking of him for a single moment.

One day Esther found him looking with terror at the famous Malay creese which he had formerly wished to use against his own life. How was it that that weapon happened to be in Eusebius's new abode? Who had brought it there? Who had placed it upon the table where he had just observed it for the first time?

No one could tell him.

One thing particularly which struck Esther as very singular was, that in the midst of the luxury which surrounded him Eusebius continued to live with the greatest possible simplicity. Although he had a dozen servants, he dispensed, as far as was strictly possible, with their services; and although his table was luxuriously appointed, he continued to observe the same simplicity in his own diet as in earlier days, eating of the plainest articles, and drinking nothing but water.

During all this time, however, Eusebius continued to speak of his departure as very near at hand; but as, notwithstanding the evidently disordered state of his mind, his affection for Esther remained unaltered, as he had never manifested so much affection for her as at that moment, as nothing could persuade him to remain separated from her even for a few minutes, Esther soon became accustomed to that which she regarded as a monomania, forgetting her troubles and anxieties in what she considered she ought to regard as happiness.

One day, Eusebius Van den Beck, who, as we have remarked, had not once quitted his wife for a moment, went out, and remained absent for a couple of hours, and on returning, informed his wife that their passage had been taken on board the *Ruyter*, a three-mast vessel, which was to set sail for Rotterdam in a fortnight's time.

Esther received the intelligence without pleasure or regret; she cared not where she went so long as she was near Eusebius. It was evident to her, however, that it was necessary, before their departure for Europe, that her husband should settle the somewhat complicated state of

affairs which had been imposed upon them by the inheritance they had succeeded to, and should make some arrangement for the payment of the rents of the farms and houses; but the name of Doctor Basilius, which would naturally arise in the discussion of these matters, produced such an effect upon her husband that she hardly ventured to pronounce it again.

As the period of their departure approached, Esther, encouraged by M. Maës, who entirely shared her opinion upon the point, decided to open the question on the following day.

She was spared that trouble, however. During the night one of the most fearful storms with which the island had been visited for the previous ten years, more fearful, indeed, than that with which our story opened, burst forth, and directing its fury upon the roadstead of Batavia, shattered the masts and yards of those vessels which held fast to their moorings, and hurled the others upon the coast. The *Ruyter* was among the latter; it drifted from its moorings, and was driven by the wind opposite to the mouth of the Antjol, where the furious waves dashed it to pieces, without the possibility of saving a single individual of the crew.

This accident affected Eusebius excessively, and rendered him more dejected and more abstracted than ever. His feverish impatience to quit Java increased, and he again began to interest himself most assiduously in the bustle of the port, making inquiries as to the day of departure of every vessel at anchor in the roadstead. In one of these investigations he learnt that a new vessel of 800 tons burden, the *Cydnus*, perfectly able to make the passage, solidly built for sea service, was about to return almost immediately to Holland. He went to the consignee to ascertain the terms and conditions, but the latter strongly recommended him to pay a visit to the vessel, to convince himself from a personal inspection that he would really find all the advantages in it which he, the agent, promised.

Eusebius consented, and found that nothing had been

exaggerated. He engaged two berths and a cabin in the aft part of the vessel which seemed expressly suited to his own and Esther's requirements. He was leaving the vessel, perfectly satisfied with his inspection, and was on the point of getting into the boat which had brought him alongside, when, just as he was placing his foot on the first round of the ladder on the starboard side, he fancied he perceived a tiny column of smoke escaping from the deck.

He pointed it out to the consignee. The captain, who was following them, heard the remark, hurried forwards, ordered the crew to raise the main hatchway; but the men had no sooner placed their hands upon it than a stream of fire darted out from the midst of the smoke, which in another moment enveloped the mizen-mast with its thick black clouds. Fire had broken out on board the vessel.

Eusebius quitted it as fast as possible, but instead of returning to Weltevreden he remained at the end of the jetty, at the very spot where the Malay captain had bid him farewell. He instinctively felt that the misfortune which had happened to the *Cydnus*, like that which had previously befallen the *Ruyter*, was not owing to any accidental circumstance, but to the fatality which hung over him. He waited to see if the fire would destroy this vessel, as the sea had swallowed up the other.

The *Cydnus* was not more than a couple of cable's lengths from the jetty; Eusebius was accordingly an eye-witness of every individual circumstance attending the distressing yet magnificent drama of a fire at sea.

He saw the captain at his post, calm and self-possessed, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, issuing his orders to his men; and he watched the crew of the *Cydnus*, with the assistance derived from a vessel of war lying at anchor a little distance from it, employing all human means to struggle against the fire; and yet, in spite of their coolness, their courage, and their energy,—in spite of the order which presided over their exertions to

save the vessel, he was a witness of the triumph of the fearful element over all their efforts.

It seemed as if some invisible hand was generating the fire,—as if some unknown, powerful, determined breath of air revived it every time the crew were nearly rendering themselves its masters; it seemed, in fact, as if the unlucky vessel was fated to perish. By heaping up wet sails over the main hatches, and by closing hermetically all the port-holes, it was hoped that from want of air the fire would burn itself out, especially as the sailors were working the pumps used for washing down the decks, together with those in the after-part, as well as in the hold of the vessel; but the mizen-mast, the bottom of which had been burnt through, toppled over, crushing two of the crew as it fell, and again opened a large passage for the air and an issue for the flames, which soon reached the rigging and the yards.

Upon the blazing deck, the captain and the ship's company, although threatened every moment with utter destruction in the fiery furnace which was roaring and raging under their feet, would not discontinue their exertions, but seemed determined to defend their ship to the very last moment. It was ultimately decided to open all the port-holes, fill the vessel with water, and sink it, which indeed appeared to be the only resource left; but while the captain was taking the necessary measures to carry it out, the fire caught the rigging, the yards covered with the sails were ignited, and the captain was obliged to yield to the representations, nay even to the orders of the consignee, and quit the vessel.

The strangest part of the affair was, that although perfectly motionless, without breathing a syllable, and as it were petrified upon the jetty, Eusebius felt as if he himself was taking part in this fearful scene. He followed every detail with the keenest anxiety. Was it not fatality that was pursuing him and the unfortunate vessel at the same time? Was it not by or through him that destiny was striking down the innocent victims of the terrible disaster now being worked out before his eyes?

Notwithstanding what he had already witnessed in the case of the *Ruyter*, he could hardly bring himself to credit the disaster which now overwhelmed the *Cydnus*. But when, after having presented the appearance of an immense fiery furnace in the midst of the ocean,—when, after having tinged with hues of gold and purple the heaving waters which surrounded its blackened timbers, the *Cydnus*, which was now no better than a mere waif upon the face of the sea, settled down into the trough of the waters; when, in a word, all that remained of this fine craft were a few burning spars which the wind drove before it, and a few patches of foam which the eddy the vessel had made in sinking, had left floating on the surface of the sea; Eusebius sighed deeply, and raised his hand to his forehead, which was bathed in perspiration.

At this moment he turned round suddenly; he fancied he had heard the harsh laugh of Doctor Basilius, and, terror-stricken, he gazed around him in every direction. But there was no one upon the jetty but those whose faces, like his own, were full of consternation,—honest merchants, who were gazing upon this disastrous scene in utter stupor. There was no face among the many present which bore any resemblance to that of Doctor Basilius.

But what did the absence of the fiend prove? It was evident to Eusebius that his struggle with the infernal Malay had commenced. He felt that wretch's hand weighing upon his head with the strength of a giant; and again he returned home, more dejected than he had ever yet been, whether in his wretched lodging in the Chinese quarter or in his new palace at Weltevreden.

Eusebius was so terrified at what had just occurred that he concealed it from Esther, as he had already concealed from her not only the apparition of the three corpses in the doctor's house, but also the scene which had passed between him and the Malay who pretended to be Doctor Basilius.

But this time, very different, indeed, from the previous occasions, his terror, and the singular impression which the

burning of the *Cydnus* had produced upon him, seemed to work a favourable result, a salutary reaction, upon his mind. He blushed at his dejection and at the abject cowardice which possessed him. He accepted the struggle.

Eusebius was young, of a nature full of courage, and of a determined, bold, and self-willed character. We have seen his desire to save his wife, whatever the cost might be; and he had succeeded in saving her. He made up his mind to wrestle boldly with these phantoms, if phantoms they were,—with these fiends, if they were indeed fiends,—with his own imagination, if his imagination was the real source whence the evil proceeded; and in order to avoid making strangers and innocent persons any longer victims to the fatality which seemed to beset himself, he purchased from a merchant a small vessel, which he baptized with the name of the *Hope*, and which was sufficiently large to carry him and his wife to Bombay; and he reckoned that, when he had once reached that city, the hand of Doctor Basilius would not be able to reach him. From Bombay he could easily find a passage to Holland.

He rigged and fitted out his little craft without saying a word to any one on the subject, not even to Esther; selected a crew upon whose strength and courage he could rely, and a captain with whose experience he was well acquainted.

Every morning he went into Batavia to inspect the preparations for departure on board the vessel; and although every morning as he descended the hill which led into the city he expected to see his little craft destroyed by the tempest or devoured by flames, yet every morning he perceived it, with feelings of delight, balancing itself gracefully at anchor, and its sails drying in the air.

One day he returned full of delight to Weltevreden, announcing, for the first time, to Esther the cause and the result of his daily expeditions to Batavia, desiring her to get ready to leave the next day by the evening tide. Esther was confounded by so sudden a decision.

"You cannot think of such a thing," she said; "you will not have time to see M. Maës between this and to-morrow."

"Why should I see M. Maës at all?" asked Eusebius.

"To settle our affairs with him." Eusebius shook his head dissentingly. "Remember that we shall be leaving behind us property amounting to nearly a million of florins."

"What does that matter to me?"

"We have accepted the inheritance."

"No, no," said Eusebius resolutely. "This money would not do us any good; I will have nothing to do with it."

"And yet, my dear Eusebius, we inherit this money from my uncle; and there was nothing dishonourable in the way in which he acquired it."

"I tell you I will have nothing to do with it," Eusebius replied, with an impatience which Esther had never remarked in him before. "If you care for this fortune, which does, in fact, come from your uncle, as you say, remain here. My heart will suffer bitterly, cruelly, I know; but *I* shall leave; and my very repudiation of this money will prove how much I love you. Decide whether you prefer it to me."

"Oh, Eusebius, how can you speak in that way!"

"I speak as a Christian."

"It is not for myself that I care for this fortune."

"For whom, then?"

"Eusebius," said his young wife, blushing, and casting her eyes modestly down, "if we should ever have any children!"

"Children!" said Eusebius, starting.

"Is not such a thing possible?" asked Esther.

"Well, in such a case they will have to do as we do—work for their living."

"Forgive me, dearest!" she returned, sighing deeply; "I have realized what misery is; I have seen you struggling against it to provide me with what I needed during my terrible illness, and I have the deepest horror

of its approach." Eusebius remained thoughtful and silent, but did not yield. "At least," said Esther, who hoped that a conference with M. Maës would render her husband less indisposed for a fortune for which she could not understand his repugnance, "if you do not yourself care for this money, dispose of it in favour of the poor; and if we are poor amidst others, a good work done will plead for us before the throne of Heaven."

"No," replied Van den Beck for the last time; "let what comes from the devil return to the devil!"

Esther sighed again, but silently began to make her preparations for departure.

The following day, when the tide was serving, the carriage took them to the jetty, where the yawl of the *Hope* was awaiting their arrival. The minutes appeared like ages to Eusebius; it seemed, too, as if a space as wide as the whole world lay between the port and the vessel which was at anchor in the roadstead, and that he should never reach it. At last, however, they arrived alongside the little craft.

Eusebius sprang lightly from the boat to the ladder which was hanging down the side of the *Hope*, convinced that every moment he should hear the announcement of some accident to delay his departure. Once there he held out his hand to Esther. But no sooner had his wife placed her foot upon the first round of the ladder than she turned pale, her head fell back, she gave one heavy sigh, and fainted. If Eusebius had not had hold of her, the weakness with which she had been overcome was so sudden that she would have fallen into the sea.

The sailors on board the *Hope* ran forward, and, with the assistance of those in the yawl, helped Eusebius to carry his wife into the deck cabin, while the boat went off to another vessel and begged the presence of a surgeon.

When the surgeon arrived he felt Esther's pulse, and smiled encouragingly at those who were looking on. When Esther, who was now returning to her senses, opened her eyes, he asked to be permitted to exchange a

few words alone with his patient. Eusebius drew back several paces, but without taking his eyes off his wife's face; and when he saw her lying before him pale, silent, and almost lifeless, he thought of the night when he had believed her dead. He observed that Esther coloured faintly at a question which the doctor addressed to her.

"Do you think of making a long journey?" said the ship's surgeon to Eusebius.

"We are going to Bombay first, and then from Bombay to Europe."

The doctor shook his head, and said: "Such a voyage is out of the question, sir."

"Why so, if you please?" cried Eusebius.

"Because, I suppose, you have some regard for your wife's life."

"Oh! more than for my own a thousand times," cried Eusebius.

"Well, then, to undertake such a voyage just now would be simply to endanger it."

"How so?"

"Because in a few months' time she will make you a father."

It was almost with an exclamation of distress that Eusebius received an announcement which, under any other circumstances, would have overwhelmed him with delight. Ten minutes afterwards the boat conveyed M. and Madame Van der Beck back to the jetty from which it had brought them; and as he once again placed his foot upon the ground, Eusebius exclaimed: "It was that fiend's doing. Well, if we must struggle, struggle we will."

CHAPTER X.

Eusebius Van den Beck returned home sorrowful, but resigned.

He saw himself chained to Java by a will stronger than his own, nay, by a power which seemed supernatural.

He felt the utter inutility of any efforts which he might make to free himself from this influence.

By degrees, however, his confidence returned.

He argued that, after all, the issue of the struggle between Doctor Basilius and himself depended upon his own will and constancy; that it was in his own power alone to regulate the impulses of his own heart, and that that heart was too thoroughly possessed with the image of Esther to allow any of the doctor's sinister predictions to be realized. He resolved to have greater faith in his own feelings and affections, and, to his wife's great surprise, he showed himself, on the very evening of the day he had met with this third disappointment, more cheerful than he had been for many months previously.

When Esther found that he had decided to remain at Java, at least until she should have recovered from her confinement, she was desirous of trying whether the counsels she had received from the notary Maës would not complete the cure so happily commenced. She spoke to Eusebius of the personal attention which ought to be given to their fortune to prevent it from becoming jeopardized, and of the necessity of his creating some occupation for himself, in order to distract his mind in some degree from the gloomy thoughts which she saw pass like clouds across her husband's face in spite of his efforts to conceal them from her.

To her great astonishment, Eusebius did not make a single remark at the allusion to the fortune which only

the evening before, nay, that very morning, had aroused his indignation and anger.

The reason was that since his return from his vessel the *Hope*, Eusebius had thought the matter over under a new light.

The sentiments aroused at the idea of his approaching paternity, the most deep-seated and imperious feelings in our nature, had worked upon him effectually, and had completely modified his manner of looking at things.

The very man—who, as far as he himself was individually concerned, would cheerfully have renounced all the splendours which the millions of Basilius had procured for him, and with which he could surround himself,—who would have abandoned everything and willingly returned to the obscure and miserable existence of a poor clerk,—had in a moment become incapable of the sacrifice, when he found that he should not be the only one to have to bear the consequences, that he would be dragging down others with him, those for whom he already felt that the wide world had not happiness, wealth, and splendour sufficient to lay before them ; that he would be destroying the future of his yet unborn child, whom he already loved with the same excessive affection which he had for the mother.

In consequence of this change in his views, he had a long conversation with his wife on the subject.

This conversation suggested to him the idea of adopting a mixed course of conduct, having regard for the necessities which his affection for his child imposed upon him, as well as for the conscientious discharge of his natural duties.

The decision at which he at last arrived was to accept the fortune of Doctor Basilius only as a trust, which he would have to account for, or to restore either to the poor or to the doctor himself, if it were indeed true that he had not been the dupe of an hallucination, and that Basilius was still alive, reserving to himself the privilege of creating a fortune, which should be his own by means of

the fortune belonging to another, and which was temporarily deposited in his hands.

When Eusebius had once formed a resolution, whatever might be its nature, he never swerved from it. On the very day following that on which he had decided upon the particular line of conduct to adopt, he had visited his property in the province of Buitenzorg; had made himself master of the mode of cultivation of the coffee-plant, which covered the greatest part of that immense extent of country; had meditated anxiously upon the improvements to be introduced, and two days afterwards had hired a counting-house and a store-house in the lower town, engaged half a dozen clerks, and a month afterwards the house of *Eusebius Van den Beck* was regarded as one of the most important, not only in Batavia, but even in the colony.

Although everybody envied the happiness they attributed to him, Eusebius Van den Beck was not a happy man. Bound to his work as a slave to the soil, his fixed idea,—that of making speedily a considerable fortune which he could regard as his own, and which should be perfectly distinct from that belonging to Doctor Basilius, to which he felt he had no claim,—absorbed him so thoroughly, that, without being aware of it, he insensibly discontinued that constant care and attention towards his wife which she had been accustomed to expect and receive from him.

Really and truly he perhaps only loved her the more, but it would have been necessary to read not only in Eusebius's heart, but in his thoughts also, to understand that.

Realizing in every particular all that his wife had regarded as a stretch of imagination on the part of the notary, he gave up not only his days, but his nights also, to his affairs. Hardly had the sun risen than he had left Batavia to inspect his negroes at work in the province of Buitenzorg, and in the evening he hurried home again as fast as his horses could bear him along in his carriage; contrary, too, to the habits of the Javanese merchants,

and at the risk of becoming fever-stricken, he remained in the lower town long after the sun had set, in order to dispose of the business connected with the mercantile part of his affairs with greater despatch.

But notwithstanding his activity, and in spite of the intelligence which he brought to bear upon his affairs, Heaven did not seem to bless his efforts, for the approximative balance-sheet which he drew up at the end of every month did not, after having struck a balance five several times, show any increase in the fortune he had inherited from Doctor Basilius.

Everything was singular in Eusebius's life: it was useless for him to sell, buy, resell, speculate, run risks, take every kind of precaution, proceed regardless of any, or even to make intentional blunders in his business transactions, a perfectly-balanced total on the debtor and creditor side of the account was invariably the result at the end of every month, and this total was always that of the original fortune.

But in proportion as success deceived his hopes, owing to a dogged determination which may easily be understood, the fever of gain which animated Eusebius increased; he desired to get the mastery over fortune, and to engage in a hand-to-hand struggle with her; his activity changed into a kind of fury, his zeal into a species of desperation. He trenched upon the time which he had at first set apart for rest from his labours, with a view of discovering some new combinations which would give him the fortune he so ardently desired, which would allow him to rid himself of that which weighed so heavily on his conscience.

For the second time, and under the influence of this devouring fever, his health became seriously affected, and for the second time Esther conceived the liveliest and deepest anxiety on his account.

One day she hazarded a few observations, and implored her husband to take some repose; but Eusebius, who had always been so good and kind to her, answered her in a tone which admitted of no reply, that the poor

young creature, whose constant anxiety was to gratify him whom she loved so tenderly, feared for a moment that she had displeased him, and vowed for the future to keep silent, and to resign herself patiently.

The period when Esther was about to become a mother was fast approaching. Eusebius, wrapped up in his affairs, could not walk out with her as often as her condition required, and to her great disappointment she was obliged to go out alone.

One evening towards the end of the month, when Eusebius, more absorbed and more anxious than ever, had just left his house for the lower town, Madame Van den Beck, who was always sensitively impressed with everything which affected her husband, and feeling herself beset by great dejection, desired her carriage to be brought round, in order that she might enjoy the cool evening air beneath the beautiful shade of the Place du Roi.

For some time her carriage followed the file of other carriages in that city, where they constitute an article of actual necessity. But her exceeding loveliness attracting general attention, and embarrassed at the sensation which her presence produced among the youth of the Javanese colony, she desired the postilion to turn down the street called the Rue de Parapattan, and on reaching the banks of the Tjiliwong, directed her servants to follow the banks of the river. It was the hour when the young Javanese indulge in the salutary recreation of the bath, and steep, rather than merely wash, themselves in its yellow waters. Every clump of mangrove-trees concealed its group of native women, whose songs and laughter seemed to animate the somewhat monotonous shores of the Batavian river.

When the carriage had proceeded about a quarter of a mile, Esther's attention was attracted by the sound of shouts and cries at a little distance from her. As she advanced, she perceived a man covered with rags chased by children of both sexes, who were running and shouting after him, pelting him at the same time with stones and mud.

The man in question was about fifty years of age, with a *sarong*, or loose garment, hanging in shreds about him; he was leaning upon a stick, and seemed hardly able to walk along. Notwithstanding the miserable state of his clothes, his face, which was surrounded with a greyish beard, was far from being deficient in a kind of nobleness of expression. He seemed indifferent to the shouts with which the barbarous children—and children are barbarous in every country of the world—insulted his old age and his miserable condition, and merely turned aside when a stone seemed likely to reach him.

In spite of his skill in evading the missiles, a stone hurled by one of the strongest of this little band of rascals struck the old man in the face. He groaned slightly, and advancing to the bank of the river, began to wash away the blood which flowed from the wound, without addressing a single reproach to the author of this cruel outrage.

Esther darted out of the carriage and ran forward to the old man. The troop of children dispersed immediately; they saw a lady dressed in white hurrying towards them, and fled in all directions, making the air resound with cries and threats, with which, in default of stones, they treated the old man.

Esther, approaching the beggar, said to him, "Poor man, those wicked children have hurt you; can I be of any assistance to you?"

The beggar looked at her. "Fair lady," he replied, "your pity has already healed the most painful of my wounds; I, who live far away from my fellow-creatures, suffer bitterly when I find them so evilly disposed in their tenderest age; but your hand stretched forth in help has consoled me. May Batara-Armara, the God of Love, recompense you; and may Buddha bless you, not only in your own person, but also in that of your unborn child."

"You seem wearied, my poor man," observed Esther.

"I have been walking a long time."

"How far?"

"Since the beginning of the moon."

This reply did not enlighten Esther very much, who was accustomed to measure time in another manner. The beggar perceived that his answer was not understood. "The sun has risen and has set seven times," he said, "since I began my journey."

"You have come from some distance, then?" asked Esther.

"From the remotest part of the province of Batavia."

"What motive can possibly have induced you at your age to undertake so long a journey?"

"Buddha had blessed the field which had descended to me from my father, and I lived there happily; but evil-minded men came and drove me from the land which for five generations my ancestors had watered with the sweat of their brows. May Buddha preserve the fertility of that field, and shed refreshing coolness upon the fields that surround it; but Argalenka will eat no more of their fruit; Argalenka will never sleep again beneath their shade." And the old man sighed deeply.

"Why have they taken your field from you?" asked Esther.

"Because I have retained the faith of my fathers; because I have affirmed that the Prophet of Islam, who said, 'Strike, and kill,' was an evil genius."

"And you are coming to ask for justice?"

The beggar smiled, but this time with bitterness. "Justice is yonder," he said, pointing to Heaven with his finger; "wings are needed to go in search of it: like the caterpillar which lives upon the sweet canes, I shall wait until the resurrection gives me wings to fly thither."

"But," persisted Esther, with increasing interest, "why do you quit your forests,—the fields where God does not limit the rays of His sun or the gifts of His nature merely in proportion to the wealth of those who live there? Here, you will be persecuted, disgraced, hunted about, as was the case just now. The people at Batavia do not tolerate beggars."

"I came weighed down by the hand of Buddha, and

weighed down by his will I will walk on, until he says to me 'Stop!'"

"And how can the Buddha you speak of communicate his orders to you?" Esther inquired, with an expression of incredulity which she was unable to repress.

"At night the body sleeps," replied the old man, with an exaltation which ennobled still more than ever the character of his features; "matter subsides into a state of torpor, and the spirit, freed from its earthly trammels, wings its flight towards the high heavens, which are its home, its resting-place. It towers on high; it soars ever onward, ever upward; and if it does not see Buddha, as it will see him later when freed entirely from its worldly covering, that is, face to face, it feels at least the glow which emanates from the presence of the deity, and its heart opens, expands, and palpitates at approaching the god: as yet it is but a faint murmur; but still it hears the voice of Buddha, and the accents of that voice have found an echo in the spirit."

"I understand you are referring to dreams," said Esther, smiling in her turn.

"Yes," replied the old man, fixing his look, full of faith and fervour, upon the heavens.

"And what have your dreams told you?"

"They have told me of the city of the Europeans, and, in that city, of the gold which would fall at my feet—gold which would enable me to purchase the child of my own flesh and blood who has been sold into captivity."

"And is that all your dreams have shown you?"

"No; I have seen my child, my own flesh and blood, although Heaven has hidden its face from her, and she is accursed. She was trampling under her feet, she was strangling in her arms, she was tearing with her nails, another woman as beautiful as herself, but as fair as you; and the voice from on high called to me: 'This is not just; rise up and walk, you, the father—you, the judge.'"

Esther was puzzled whether to look upon this poor fellow as a madman or not. The ringing tones of his

voice, the fevered brightness of his look when uttering the strange mysterious words, had produced a profound sensation upon the young woman.

She drew her purse, and placed it in the beggar's hand. "Here, poor man," she said, "I do not regard myself as having any connection with the dream you have been narrating, but I should at least like to participate in it; take this, as a commencement of the fortune which Buddha has promised you."

The beggar hesitated to accept the purse which Esther offered him. "The hand which in my dream gave me the gold that Buddha sent me was white like your own, but it was the hand of a man."

"Well, take this gold, then, in the name of my husband, who is a man as fair as he whom you saw in your dream."

The Bedouin bowed his head in token of acknowledgement.

"And as you are fatigued, my friend," continued Esther, "my carriage will take you as far as the first houses of the outskirt of the town, where you will be able to find a lodging."

"Thanks, but my limbs, weak as they seem to you, are quite able to take me there; I should spoil your palanquin as the palmer caterpillar does the fruit of the mangrove. You have delivered me from the hands of those wicked children; you have given me gold; it is Buddha who has received your kindness, for Buddha is beneath the rags of all the poor, and Buddha will reward you."

With these words the old man made a sign of adieu to Esther, and strode rapidly away.

CHAPTER XI.

Madame Van den Beck remained for some minutes musing over her singular interview with this stranger; and in order to think more at her leisure about the old man, she desired her servant to wait with the carriage, and, putting down her veil, walked slowly on. She had already strolled a distance of several hundred yards, when a man, who had been following her for some time, passed close to her, and coolly stared in her face.

Esther was so surprised at the man's assurance that she was unable to resist a sudden exclamation of alarm, and turned back towards the spot where she had left her servants, without giving herself time to notice the person who had just looked at her so impertinently. But the stranger turned round too, and before Esther was able to rejoin her carriage, began to address a few complimentary phrases to her.

But Madame Van den Beck had no sooner heard the sound of the stranger's voice, had no sooner glanced at the person who addressed her, than the terror she had just exhibited was changed into a merry burst of laughter.

She had recognized the notary Maës; who, on his side, had no sooner perceived that the solitary walker was none other than his pretty client, than he stopped abruptly, overwhelmed with confusion. "What! is it you, dear M. Maës?" exclaimed Esther.

"Madam—madam," stammered the notary, who seemed to get more and more embarrassed every moment, "pray forgive me; but I assure you I thought I recognized Madame Maës's walk." Esther smiled under her veil.

"And may I ask what important business can have induced you, at this hour, to look for Madame Maës upon the banks of the Tjilewang?"

"Business, at this hour! pray, fair lady," returned M. Maës, "don't think of such a thing; it is half-past six; business may go to the deuce now, for all I have to do now is to amuse myself. I had promised myself the pleasure of a stroll with Madame Maës, had given her an appointment in this out-of-the-way place, and it was that which occasioned my mistake; a mistake which I rejoice in exceedingly, madam, since it enables me to offer you my arm, and to conduct you to your carriage. Will you allow me?" said he, and the gallant notary made a profound obeisance.

"With great pleasure, M. Maës," replied Esther; "and if you would like to avail yourself of my carriage to return home, I shall be glad to offer you a seat in it."

The notary hesitated; he turned round several times towards the side of the canal, where in the dim twilight the brown forms of the pretty Javanese women, wrapped in their damp sarongs, which clung to their bodies and revealed the beautiful outlines of their figures, were indistinctly visible; and M. Maës could not but feel he would be acting very meritoriously if he were to sacrifice this his favourite promenade. On the other hand, the wish to be seen in public with one of the loveliest of the European residents in the city, exposed him to a very keen temptation; and this, it appeared, was too much for him to resist, for when the black servant let down the steps, and Madame Van den Beck was seated in the carriage, he climbed in, making the carriage almost topple over with his enormous weight.

"Pray excuse me, madam," said M. Maës, when he was comfortably seated next to Esther, "but, in my surprise, I have forgotten to ask after M. Van den Beck."

"Alas!" returned Esther, whom the notary's question reminded of her many causes of anxiety and distress.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I understand, amidst all your prosperity that is the gnawing worm; your husband's health must make you very anxious. I have remarked it for a long time; he is killing himself with work, poor young man," added M. Maës; "and I am at a loss to

conceive how, rich as he is, and for the sake of a few wretched thousand florins, he can sacrifice an existence which might be so bright, and especially so happy a one, when passed at your feet."

"Is it possible," replied Esther, more and more astonished at the discoveries she was making in those portions of the notary's character which were unknown to her, "that it can be you who are speaking in such language?"

"Why not?" replied M. Maës, with the most natural air in the world; "what is there so astonishing in it? I am a notary it is true, but I am not the less a man on that account; and I assure you that I most heartily condemn that thirst for gain which makes men forget the beautiful and good things which Heaven has placed in this world for man's enjoyment under the designation of pleasure."

"But I thought," replied Esther, "that the business of your office occupied every moment of your time."

"Do not speak to me of my office, dear madam," returned M. Maes, with an air of profound melancholy, and endeavouring to take hold of a hand which obstinately persisted in evading his grasp, "do not speak to me of my office. Pah! I fancy I still smell that filthy odour of dried parchment, and of old boxes full of worms and law papers. No, indeed, let me, on the contrary, give myself up entirely to the enjoyment of this drive, to the delight of passing rapidly through the air perfumed with the fragrance of the surrounding gardens, and that, too, by the side of one of the most charming women in the colony."

"Really, M. Maes," said Esther, smiling partly at the gallantry of the notary, and partly at the change which had taken place in the tone of his morality; on the occasion of the last visit I had the honour of paying you, I was unable to appreciate the full extent of your courtesy."

"Ah! madam," said M. Maes, growing more and more sentimental in his manners and language, have you really

been under a mistake with regard to my feelings for the fairest half of the human race? Woman, madam, is the sole charm, the only consolation of our existence."

"How delighted Madame Maës would be if she could hear you," said Esther smilingly.

"For mercy's sake, madam," replied the notary, with a most beseeching expression of face, "not a word on that subject. Do you not feel the intoxicating charm of an evening like this? Do you not think it delightful to live and breathe independent of all trammels—relieved from every kind of annoyance and anxiety?"

"But what about the interests of your clients, which you told me absorbed you night and day!"

"Deuce take the clients when evening has once closed in. Oh, these lovely evenings in the tropics! Why has not Heaven made them last four-and-twenty hours!"

"Upon my word, M. Maës," said Esther, "I go on from one surprise to another in conversing with you; and I am at a loss to reconcile your manners and language with the gravity of your profession."

"My profession, madam—my profession, do you say?" exclaimed M. Maës with an expression of profound disgust. "Do you really think that I am bent upon making myself as thin, and pale, and yellow as M. Van den Beck, by never relaxing the drudgery it imposes upon me? My profession! why, madam, the very porter on the quays has his hours of rest, when he lies idly on the shore and listens to the sound of the billows as they lovingly unroll their crests upon the sand, or watches the sun gilding the blue waves with its setting splendour, or dyeing them with purple hues: *he* may abandon himself to the supreme happiness of doing nothing, while *I*, M. Maës, the notary, the owner of a few hundred thousand florins, am not to have an hour, a moment, to breathe quietly, to enjoy the many beautiful and excellent things which Heaven has scattered along my path, to find music enjoyable, wines pleasant to the taste, and women pretty! Honour to whom honour is due. But no, no, madam," continued the notary, after these parenthetical remarks; "the glass

which has been filled too full will run over, and that would be a thousand pities, especially when the glass is filled with champagne. Pleasure for ever, say I again, Madame Van den Beck ; and if you wish your husband to keep in good health, tell him to follow my example."

Notwithstanding the trivial character of the notary's remarks, Esther could not avoid being impressed by them ; she had been brought almost to wish that her husband might resemble the burly, broad-faced notary ; for she could not deny that his healthy appearance denoted life in the real sense of the word, while, on the contrary, the dejection and constant melancholy to which her husband was a prey was more like death ; she felt it to be so, and dreaded it accordingly.

"Yes," she said, "you are perhaps right, M. Maës ; and I ought to be very angry with you for having induced me to urge my husband into the course in which he is at present engaged—into commercial pursuits which will kill him."

"What ! — I say so ! — I advise such a thing !" exclaimed M. Maës, with an admirably imitated expression of surprise, and opening his eyes as large as bagatelle-balls.

"Certainly, sir," replied Esther ; "do you not remember it ?"

"What time in the day was it, madam, when you came to ask me an opinion of that kind, madam ?"

"Some time during the day, I believe—in the afternoon, about three or four o'clock."

"The thing is easily explained, then ; it was the notary you saw then, and M. Maës was obliged to talk of such kinds of matters. The real time to find him was when he had shaken off the dust of that wretched office—when the caterpillar had become a butterfly ; then he would have told you, as he tells you this evening, let us be grave and serious only at certain times, if we do not wish to become petrified into mummies. But do not be uneasy ; I will repair the mischief I have done."

"In what way ?"

"I will go and pay him a visit this evening; and may I be condemned to work a couple of extra hours if I do not get him to distract his thoughts in the same way as I do."

"As you do!" exclaimed Esther, who began to feel somewhat suspicious of M. Maës's levity.

"As I do, of course. Don't make yourself uneasy, my dear madam; and don't let the fireworks of my gaiety alarm you. When I once leave my office, I am like a famished man sitting down to a marriage feast; but evil be to him who evil thinks, fair lady; and the relaxations in which I take the greatest pleasure are the conversation and society of a few intimate friends, as good boon companions as I am myself, and with whom, no later than to-morrow indeed, I hope to make M. Van den Beck acquainted."

"My husband, sir," replied Esther, masking her uneasiness with a smile, "has accustomed me to rely with perfect confidence on his affection, so that I should never be jealous of any amusements in which I might not be able to participate."

At this moment the carriage drew up at the hotel; and the notary, alighting first, offered his hand to Esther; having ascertained that Eusebius had returned home, he followed her into the hotel.

M. Maës's loud bursts of merriment at first terrified the gloomy disposition of Esther's husband; and the notary soon perceived that he would have a difficult task to overcome the repugnance which M. Van den Beck exhibited for anything which would take him away from his home, or divert his attention from his commercial pursuits. And so the worthy magistrate resorted to a *ruse*, and took advantage of an opportunity of Esther leaving the room.

"Well, M. Van den Beck, are you satisfied with your affairs?" he asked. "Coffee prices are low now, and that ought to suit you."

"Why, no; I sold my crop some time ago, so that it makes no difference to me," replied Eusebius, in a tone in

marked contradiction with his words, notwithstanding his efforts to make the one accord with the other.

"That is a pity," replied the notary—"really a great pity, for I could have found you an advantageous opportunity of disposing of part of your crop."

"I think I have a few thousand kilogrammes in my storehouse still," replied Eusebius promptly. "Send your purchaser to me; and if we can agree upon terms, you will get your commission, of course."

"Bah! My dear M. Van den Beck, I care as little for my commission as a peacock does for a crow's feather. Just now I am doing a kindness, and don't sell it; but I cannot do what you wish."

"Why not?"

"Because the man I allude to is an original, who transacts his business in his own way, not upon 'change, nor in counting-houses, nor upon the quays, but with his glass and his pipe in his hand."

"In that case," said Eusebius, "I am as little likely to do business with him as he with me, so we will drop the subject."

"Bah! bah! bah!" returned M. Maës; "fifty thousand florins are well worth picking up, even at the bottom of a bottle; and I don't advise you, dear M. Van den Beck, to let any one else have the drinking of it."

"Fifty thousand florins," repeated Eusebius, musing over the largeness of the amount; "do you think it likely he will take a quantity of coffee large enough to leave a margin of profit of that moment?"

"He will take as much as you can supply him with."

"Take care; you are perhaps undertaking too much."

"No; I will answer for him."

Eusebius was almost half persuaded. It was not, as M. Maës supposed, a feeling of avarice which influenced him, but in his accounts, or rather from his accounts, which he had balanced that very morning, he had been struck with the singular monthly result which he had ascertained for the seventh time, and which proved that in spite of all his exertions and the various bad specula-

tions he had entered into, he had not succeeded in altering, either by increasing or diminishing it, the amount of the capital which he had invested in commerce, and which, almost to a penny, remained invariably the same.

He perceived in this a further manifestation of that secret intervention in all that concerned him which had prevented his departure for Europe. He wished therefore once more to try and struggle against it, and to paralyze it if he could.

"Well, I agree," he said. "Where can we meet your man?"

M. Maës lowered his voice as if he were afraid of being overheard. "Do you know, Meester Cornelis?" he asked, with a half-smile on his face.

"No, indeed," replied Eusebius; "in fact, this is the very first time I ever heard the name mentioned."

"Well, then, to-morrow you shall know all about the place and the party, and you will be grateful to me for the introduction; for, may I die," continued the notary energetically, "if it is not a place worth knowing."

"But the man about the coffee? don't forget that it is with him, and not with Meester Cornelis, that my business lies."

"The man about the coffee will be there."

"Remember that I am only going there on his account."

"Precisely so; at half-past seven I shall call for you."

"In the evening?"

"Yes; he only transacts business by candle-light; that, again, is a fancy of his."

Esther here entered the room; tea was served, the conversation fell upon general matters, and Eusebius, on conducting M. Maës to the door, promised to be ready for him the next day.

CHAPTER XII.

THE following day, at the hour agreed upon, M. Maës's carriage drew up at Eusebius Van den Beck's door.

Never had the jolly notary shown himself in such exuberant spirits; the profound placidity of expression of a man who, like Horace, has postponed all matters of business until the morrow, illumined his broad face. He inhaled the evening air in gulps, both deep and loud, and puffed it out again with a noise like that which whales make when "blowing," or "spouting."

Eusebius, who already regretted the engagement he had formed the previous evening, found himself unable to resist the earnestness with which the notary claimed the execution of his promise he had made, and took his place accordingly by the notary's side in the open carriage in which the latter had called for him. They set off, as is the invariable custom at Batavia, namely, as fast as possible, the horses in that country knowing no other pace than a hard gallop. Having proceeded at this rate for about an hour, in a westerly direction, the carriage drew up before a dark-looking mass, which Eusebius recognized in the twilight as a collection of houses.

They heard the sharp, wild music peculiar to Java issuing from these houses as they stopped, mingled with the deep sounds of the Chinese gong, and accompanied by cries so singularly modulated that they seemed to have nothing human in them. At one moment there burst forth shrieks of joys, like the ecstasies of delirium; at another, lamentations and sighs of despair, like the last moments of a dying person; sounds more resembling what one would expect to hear from the windows of a madhouse, or the dungeon of a prison.

Seated in the carriage, Eusebius perceived over the little wall, by the side of which the vehicle had drawn up, a reddish light, shining in the midst of a vast, dark, impenetrable mass; in this light the outlines of dark shadows were visible, some seemingly silent and serious in their attitudes, while others, whose spangled and jewelled dresses sparkled brilliantly amid the dim uncertain glare, were writhing about in endless contortions, which would have left little undesired by the convulsionists of diaconal Paris.

Eusebius, whose nervous agitation had far from subsided, began to tremble with alarm, and, seizing the notary convulsively by the arm, said:

"Where are you taking me too?"

"To the infernal regions, of course," replied the notary, whose fat face expanded into a broad smile.

"M. Maës," said Eusebius, whose terror at this remark, at these fantastical apparitions, and the strange, inexplicable sounds, returned in all its violence, "a truce to this idle jesting, or upon the word of a man of honour, I will seize you by the throat and strangle you where you are sitting."

And Eusebius made a gesture so expressive in its pantomimic force that the notary was almost terrified out of his life: "Confound it!" he cried, "he is quite capable of doing what he says." And then, with a strength of muscle which showed Eusebius that if he pursued his project of strangulation he would have no easy task before him, he freed himself from Eusebius's grasp, saying: "Calm yourself, my young friend, calm yourself; hell is not always what people think it to be, although it is neither better nor worse than that other kind of hell at Batavia,—the Exchange, I mean."

"Did you not tell me, M. Maës," said Eusebius determinedly, "that you were going to take me to some place where I should meet a Chinese merchant likely to deal with me for my coffees?"

"Certainly"

"Well, where is the man you referred to? show him to me, and let us make haste, I beg."

"All right, all right," said M. Maës, holding his hands out in front of him, like a boxer keeping on the defensive; "have the goodness to alight from this carriage, and see what I have been so anxious to show you, my dear M. Van den Beck; and who knows whether, since people come across so many strange things at Meester Cornelis's, you may not be lucky enough to find what you are in search of here too."

"Meester Cornelis?" repeated Eusebius, like a man endeavouring to understand a question; "what do you mean by Meester Cornelis?"

"That's an excellent joke," said the corpulent notary, bursting into a fit of laughter, which communicated a quivering motion to his whole frame. "What! is it possible that you can have been a whole year at Batavia and don't yet know who or what Meester Cornelis is? Such ignorance as that, young man, does honour to your moral principles. Come, let us get out and make the acquaintance of this unknown person, and you shall afterwards tell me frankly what you think of him. Peters, open the door quite wide, for you see I can't pass through it." In fact, although the carriage was an open one the doorway was scarcely large enough to accommodate the lower portion of M. Maës's person. Eusebius, on the contrary, remained in his place.

"Well!" said the notary when he felt both his feet firmly planted on the ground, and turning round to speak to Eusebius.

"I begin to perceive, sir," said the latter to his companion, "that you have been amusing yourself at my expense; allow me, therefore, to bid you adieu."

"My young friend," said the notary, resuming his wonted majesty of address, "look at me, I beg; do I bear the appearance of a jester, or of a practical joker? Instead of being angry with me, you ought rather to thank me; my only wish was to tear you away from your gloomy thoughts, to offer you a little amusement,

and to rouse you from that extreme dejection which inspires your young wife with the most alarming apprehensions on your account; and which, allow me to add, are very far from being unfounded."

Eusebius saw that the notary had acted from the best intentions. "I thank you for the motives which dictated your kindness, but I warn you of one thing."

"What is that?"

"That the trouble you have taken is thrown away."

"Why so?"

"Because I have no wish to avail myself of it: I came purely for a matter of business; you have deceived me; consequently, with your permission, I return to Weltevreden."

"What an aptitude for business!" exclaimed the notary, with a burst of pretended or real admiration; "how do you intend to return to Weltevreden?"

"On foot, of course."

"On foot? You?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"On foot? you cannot think of such a thing; you would not wish to disgrace yourself in the eyes of the colony. What! M. Van den Beck, the nabob, the heir of the millionaire, of the worthy and honourable Doctor Basilius, walk on foot like a poor Lascar, or a wretched Tagal! It is out of the question! you may wish to do so, M. Van den Beck, but I, at least, will not suffer such a thing."

"Allow me, then, to make use of your carriage, and tell your coachman to take me home again."

"I should be very happy to do so, my young friend, but my coachman is obliged to take me back myself; as you may well suppose, I only go out and return in that vehicle. Consequently, I should be obliged to go away with you, and I do not think it likely you will be so cruel, dear M. Van den Beck, as to take me away by force, after the terribly hard day's work I have had."

While he had been talking, the notary had drawn Eusebius to the door of the carriage, had made him alight,

and with a little gentle force had succeeded in making him take a few steps into the dark and narrow lane which led to the entrance of the establishment.

The young man still resisted, but at this moment the sound of a tambourine a few paces from where he was standing, made him turn his head, and he perceived in an open space between two houses lighted up by torches, a group of three Indians. Two of them were playing music, one by striking on a kind of tambourine, the other by blowing into a flute. The third, every now and then, plunged his hand into a kind of wicker basket of a conical form.

Several spectators were already collected round them, and were evidently awaiting the exhibition, whatever it might be, which was about to commence.

"Ah!" cried the notary, "it is Hurruck, the serpent-charmer." And, with the curiosity of a child, he hurried forward towards the group, without appearing to occupy himself any further about Eusebius.

The latter, precisely because no one tried to persuade him to go, followed the notary without the slightest difficulty, still, as it were almost mechanically.

Of the two Indians upon whom the musical portion of the spectacle devolved, the one struck the tambourine violently while the other blew furiously into his flute. At the sound of the music the wicker basket seemed to move of its own accord. With the end of a stick, Hurruck then lifted up the lid of the basket, and immediately there was seen just above the opening, the flat and triangular head of a cobra-capello. The spectators uttered a cry of alarm at its appearance, and instinctively drew back several paces.

The serpent looked all round with its two brilliant eyes as green as emeralds, uttered a hissing noise perfectly in harmony with the wild music which seemed to regulate its motions, and continuing to balance itself in time with the music, at last ended by quitting the basket altogether. The reptile was about three feet and a half long, its body perfectly black, with two yellow streaks along its whole

length, while the belly was of a dusky grey covered with yellow spots.

Its first movement, when it found itself entirely out of the basket, was seemingly in which direction it should make its escape. But at the very moment it was preparing to dart forward, Hurruck himself made a whistling or hissing noise, which had the effect of drawing the whole attention of the reptile upon him; its eyes seemed to dart forth flashes of light, assumed the variegated hues of the opal, and, raising itself upon its tail, attained, without any other assistance than the vertebræ at the end of it, the height of a couple of feet. The hissing noise which Hurruck made subsided into a kind of melodious chant, to which the tambourine and flute formed a continuous bass.

At the first sound which issued from the charmer's lips, a second head, as livid as the first, made its appearance from the basket; and a second reptile, similar to the former, having disengaged itself in the same manner, and with the same movements as its companion, ranged itself by its side, and rearing its crest began to balance itself upon its tail.

The modulations of Hurruck's voice, produced no doubt by some small instrument held between his teeth and through which he blew and drew in his breath, became more rapid; and as they increased in rapidity, so did they communicate a greater agitation to the movements of the reptiles: the opal tinge which their eyes had at first assumed, changed to a topaz; faint hissings of desire or menace escaped from their throats, their necks swelled, and their forked tongues moved restlessly about, darting an inch or two out of their mouths.

Hurruck accelerated his modulations; it seemed as if every hissing sound the Indian made was perfectly intelligible to the reptiles, and transmitted them an order which they obeyed by increasing the variety and rapidity of their movements, and by darting their tongues one against the other. At last, like the two serpents which Mercury found twisted together and to which he threw

his caduceus, they wound round each other in a close embrace, forming, as it were, one body with a double head, a head moving restlessly and rapidly about, uttering a double hissing sound, while the eyes acquired the brilliancy of rubies. When the two reptiles had apparently attained a perfect paroxysm of fury, Hurruck seized hold of both their bodies, took one in each hand, tore them from each other's embrace, and then threw them on the ground, where they again united in a passionate caress. Twice again did he separate them, twice again did they re-unite; and lastly, on the third occasion, he thrust each of them into one of his large sleeves, where they disappeared. Through the silken material of which his dress was made, the restless movements of the two serpents could be easily traced, uniting once again upon his breast, and thrusting out their heads twined round each other, with glistening eyes and slavering jaws, through the opening in the neck of Hurruck's tunic, which showed his naked body underneath. The spectators applauded this exhibition to the very echo. Eusebius alone remained insensible, or rather, incredulous. "Bah!" he said, "there is nothing very dangerous in that."

"How so!" said the notary.

"Why, of course your serpent-charmer has taken the precaution to have the fangs extracted."

Although this brief dialogue had passed in Dutch, the Indian seemed to understand it; for, seizing one of the two cobra-capellos by the neck swollen with venom, as he would have taken hold of a pistol by its butt end, he drew it from his breast, and presented it to Eusebius, with its jaws opened and turned towards him.

Van den Beck, feeling himself called upon to sustain his assertion, overcoming the extreme repugnance which the hideous reptiles inspired him with, stretched out his hand to seize the one which was held towards him. But M. Maës drew him back by the arm sharply. "What, in Heaven's name, are you going to do," he exclaimed; "are you mad, or tired of your

fortune? Is it not perfectly true, friend Hurruck," he continued, "that your serpents retain their teeth still? that they have not lost their poison? and that it would be certain death to any one who was imprudent enough to touch them?"

The only reply which Hurruck, who seemed to understand Dutch, but who, like all Indians, seemed to have a repugnance to speaking it, vouchsafed, was to lift up the lid of a second basket, to take out a live fowl, and to present it to the cobra-capello. The latter raised its head, uttered a hissing sound, darted from its ruby-like eyes a dull gleam of light, and, swift as an arrow, it struck the poor animal below the wing.

The Indian, at the same moment, let go his hold of the fowl, which attempted to fly, but was only able to advance a few paces; it tottered and tumbled, its feet refused to sustain its body, its head turned to the right and to the left with an expression of indescribable anguish; it fluttered its wings feebly, expanded them, and remained without movement upon the ground;—another moment, and it was dead.

"You see!" said the notary triumphantly; "have Hurruck's serpents fangs, or not? Tell me, also, whether there are not some rather curious things to be seen at Meester Cornelis's." And he added, in a tone of the most thorough conviction, "Hurruck is a sorcerer, and a great sorcerer too." And putting his fingers into his purse, the notary took out a piece of money, which he presented to the Indian, taking care, however, to place it in the hand which was not ornamented with its repulsive bracelet.

Eusebius imitated him, and Hurruck, having received the first offerings without addressing a single word of thanks to any of the previous givers, acknowledged the gratuity of Eusebius by a grimace that might have been intended for a smile.

"Oh! oh!" said the notary, "you are a privileged person, M. Eusebius, and Hurruck must recollect having

seen your face before ; as for me, there is hardly a single civility that I have not gone out of my way to show him, and yet he pretends to have as little recollection of my person as a monkey does of a pinch of snuff."

"Who, or what is this man?" asked Eusebius, "and why does he excite so great an interest in you?"

"He is the most amusing fellow I ever met," replied M. Maës ; "he knows a hundred tricks in magic and sorcery, for which he would have been burnt a couple of ages ago, and which afford me infinite amusement : that is the reason why I like him, and not, I assure you, because I attach the slightest importance to any of his juggling tricks. I certainly do believe in the poisoned fangs of his serpents, but not in his magic arts. Besides, it always whiles away a spare moment or two."

"But what do you actually know about the man?" asked Eusebius, who observed that the serpent-charmer was watching him with the most fixed attention, "he is not a Malay, I fancy."

"No, he is an Indian from the banks of the Ganges ; when I say Indian, I ought to have said Parsee, for he passes as a descendant of those Guebers who were worshippers of fire, and who escaped the persecutions of the Mussulmans at the time of the conquest of their country by the Caliphs, by seeking an asylum with their former brotherhood, from whom the ancient rivalry between the Chouras and Devas had separated them for many centuries."

"And this man makes magic his profession?" inquired Eusebius, affecting a profound indifference.

"Yes, indeed, and I have seen him perform some very wonderful tricks, I assure you. Besides, people attribute to him the gift of reading the future. You quite understand, of course, my young friend, that I don't believe a word of it ; but it amuses others, and I don't pretend to be better than other people. I have always found the amusements of the lower orders far more substantial than those of the classes above them."

"What are the particular properties of this gift of his?" asked Eusebius, with a curiosity which he endeavoured in vain to conceal.

"It is believed that he has certain wonderful charms in his possession capable of counteracting the designs of evil spirits. If any one should have happened to cast his spell over you," added the notary, laughing, "make your case known to Hurruck, my dear Van den Beck, "and he will free you from it without difficulty."

Eusebius pretended to laugh, but the laugh was only upon his lips, for his heart beat as if it would burst its arteries; his wild thoughts rushed through his brain in strange confusion with a sound like the continuous murmur of the surf beating against the rocks.

Remembering the daily agony in which his life was now passed, the idea occurred to him of ascertaining from Hurruck to what extent he ought to believe or to dread Doctor Basilius.

At this moment the Hindoo, who, having finished making his collection from all the spectators, and while restoring his serpents to their basket, had never taken his eyes off the two Europeans, approached Eusebius, and just as M. Maës, who was endeavouring to turn the curiosity which he fancied his young friend exhibited to advantage, pushed the latter forward, Hurruck passed closed to Van den Beck and murmured the following words in his ear :—

"He who was dead has bathed in the waters of life, and like the vulture lost to sight among the clouds of Heaven, follows with his eye the poor bengaly which hides itself in the leaves of the jungle."

Eusebius turned suddenly round and attempted to seize the Hindoo by the arm, but the latter, as if possessed of the ring of Gyges with its gift of invisibility, had disappeared.

"Where is he, where is he?" asked Eusebius.

"Who? Hurruck?" asked the notary.

"Yes, Hurruck."

"Did he say anything to you?"

"Yes."

"Whispered it in your ear?"

"Yes."

"What did he say that has frightened you so much?"

"Oh! nothing," Eusebius attempted to stammer out.

"Very good, and yet you are as pale and white as the heroine of a suttee."

"I want to see him, I want to speak to him," cried Eusebius, without replying directly to M. Maës's question but trembling like a leaf in a gust of wind.

"Oh! the rascal," said the notary; "he must hav cast one of his spells round you. Confound it, my young friend, you will now exceed even my fanaticism with regard to Hurruck; you will be running about after him as our town dandies do after the pretty little Chinese women. Follow me into the enclosure,—we shall be sure to find him there."

"What, enter there!" said Eusebius, again hesitating.

"Bah!" replied M. Maës; "*I* am going to do so,—I, a notary, attached to the government, and some of the best persons in Weltevreden with me. Besides, it is the only place where you are at all likely to meet the man you want; poor Hurruck doesn't make his appearance on 'Change very frequently."

Eusebius hesitated a moment; then seizing his companion by the arm, he hurried into the entrance like a man who had made up his mind not to alter his resolution. A strange spectacle struck him as he entered.

CHAPTER XIII.

Upon the stage of what was intended to answer the purpose of a theatre a troop of Rangouns were performing a characteristic dance. The singularity of these women's costumes was only equalled by that of their style of dance; their dresses, striped with gold, were fastened closely round their bodies in such a manner as accurately to define their figures; their waists, as flexible as reeds, were encircled by silver bands; their naked shoulders shone resplendently from the corsets which imprisoned their glowing busts; their arms waved slowly round their heads, trembling with all the symptoms of wild passion which was expressed with remarkable truthfulness by the graceful attitudes and modulated movements of their bodies; their fingers moving rapidly, seemed to testify to the various phases of eager enjoyment; and confused songs and wild melodious music added still more to the mysterious effect of their gestures.

The spectators, some seated, others standing up, followed each of their movements with the most breathless curiosity, presenting, in the variety of their costumes and apparent positions of life, no less than in the difference of their ages, a spectacle scarcely less curious to an attentive observer than the Rangouns themselves.

There were representatives of every class of the population of the Indian continent and the Indian archipelago: Javanese noblemen clad in silken sarongs, with their creeses by their side, and their fingers sparkling with diamonds; and peasants with a coarse cotton wrapper thrown round their loins, and conical-shaped hats upon their heads; the Chinese banker stood side by side with the coolie and the street porter; European and Malay sailors were there in numbers, and at intervals the crowd was interspersed with a few colonists and strangers, who were attracted from curiosity or attended from habit.

Generally speaking, the dancing appeared to be the exhibition most appreciated by the residents, who seemed to take the liveliest interest in the ardent poem of voluptuousness, of which these women were the delineators. For the spectators, the magnificent windings of the arms, the head rolling upon the shoulders as if abandoned to its own weight, the expression of the eyes, the imperceptible balancing of the body, that hurried, tumultuous, convulsive trembling of the whole frame, the fingers, in which every active principle of life seemed to have taken refuge—were like some mysterious music of which they comprehended every note.

The more matter-of-fact Chinese abandoned themselves to their frenzied passion for gambling, following with eager and feverish anxiety the rolling of the dice; the copper coins fell in abundance, and the pitiless banker swept from the poor ragged wretches their whole possessions.

Like the Javanese, M. Maës had given himself up entirely to the voluptuous spectacle of the dancing Rangouns, but nothing could fix Eusebius's attention, and his look wandered among the various groups for the strange Indian whose words had so strongly aroused his curiosity and made his heart throb.

"Do you not see him?" he asked his companion.

"Who? the Boadissa?" replied the latter, pointing to a dancer whose part in the pantomime required her to perform a kind of *pas seul*. "Oh! certainly, I see her, and think her very pretty, in spite of her tawny skin and the gold rings through her nose. No country-woman of my own ever seemed half so magnificent."

"I am not speaking of the Rangoun, but of Hurruck: where is he?"

"Confound it! Look for him yourself, my young friend! Hurruck was all very well a little while ago; but when the Rangouns are dancing, they may come and tell me that the governor-general wants me, or that my house is on fire, or that the Javanese are sacking the town, but they won't get me to move. Go and look in the opium-smoking rooms, you will be sure to find him

there: he knows how to enjoy himself, the rascal." And M. Maës returned to the subject which engrossed him so completely, his huge head beating false time, and his own frame following the various contortions which the rhythm conveyed to the bodies of the Rangouns.

Despairing of obtaining anything more from his friend, Eusebius bent his steps towards the smoking-rooms, which consisted of a range of small huts or single apartments, built against the wall of the inclosure. Many of the huts were closed, but in some of the others he observed, reclining upon the matting, which was the only furniture in the place, individuals passing through the various phases of giddiness, intoxication, fury, and convulsions, the natural results of this powerful narcotic.

In one of the huts in question, Eusebius recognized the Indian, and, entering it, sat down beside him on the matting. Hurruck held in his hand a small silver-gilt pipe, the bowl of which, in shape and size, was not unlike a common sewing-thimble. He filled it with a brown-looking substance, inhaled a few mouthfuls, and threw himself back upon his mat in a state of ecstasy.

Just before Eusebius entered the hut, he felt himself held back by the tail of his coat, and, turning round, observed a Javanese beggar, dressed in a sarong which was hanging in ribbons about him. "Kind gentleman," said the man, holding out his hand to the European, "take pity on an unfortunate wretch whom Buddha has smitten with madness, and who has just left his last piece of money under the rake of the Chinese." As much from pity for the wretched object beside him as to free himself from his importunities, Eusebius gave him what he asked. The Javanese covered his head with a corner of the rags which served him for clothing, in token of acknowledgment.

"May the Spirit of Salvation descend from Mount Sumbrig and keep your worship from witchcraft," said the beggar, in a low tone. "But let him not forget," he added, looking fixedly at the young Dutchman, "that Buddha has given him eyes and a heart to protect him-

self from the black arts, and that the best means of protecting himself is to flee those who practise evil."

In the midst of the approaching stage of intoxication which he wished to attain, Hurruck had preserved a sufficient amount of intelligence to hear what the Javanese had just said. "Away with you, dog, and son of a dog, that you are?" he cried, addressing the beggar, who disappeared immediately in the shades. "And you, sahib, are you not ashamed to give your money to that vile creature, who will at once throw it away to that grasping Chinese?"

At this burst of virtuous indignation on the part of the Indian, who, himself a prey to one of the most shameless human passions, reproved that in which the Javanese indulged, Eusebius, despite his serious thoughts, could not help smiling. "But you, Hurruck," he said, "seem to be making a very bad use of the money which I gave you just now."

Hurruck shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "I!" he said. "In a few minutes I shall be a god; and like gods, and with gods, I shall see the graceful forms of the Bedayas, who are always dancing before them, ascending and descending from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth." With these words, he again filled his pipe with tobacco mixed with opium, and handed it to Eusebius. "Do like me," he said, "and like me you will see that which has been created only for the eyes of spirits."

Eusebius gently pushed back the pipe which the Indian presented to him; and the latter, whose brain was yielding to the powerful influence of the narcotic, began to murmur in a voice partially that of conversation and partially a kind of monotonous chant:—"The sun is the father of fire, and fire is the god of men: it is his burning breath which kindles love in their veins—love which quickens life, and, like fire, purifies and creates it."

"Speak, Hurruck," said Eusebius, who trembled lest the intoxication of the Indian might prevent him from

answering the questions he was burning to put to him. "Answer me, and you shall be rewarded in proportion to the service you render me. You knew Basilius, the white doctor?"

"Knowledge is preserved by silence: the wise man is he who knows how to hold his peace," replied Hurruck, "and the Indian is looked upon as a wise man among those who know him."

"Tell me what you know of the doctor, and you shall have no reason to complain of my generosity. Speak, Hurruck, I entreat you."

"The Dutch sahib said that he would subdue his heart," murmured the Indian, resuming his monotonous chant; "the Dutch sahib swore that he would control the impulses of love, which consumes us all alike. The sahib is mad; for mad, indeed, is he who pretends to become the master of the fire—the master of us all; mad is that man who says to the flames which are laying waste the jungle, 'You shall burn this, but shall not extend farther.'"

These words, which, beneath their enigmatical form concealed a meaning which Eusebius could not mistake, struck him forcibly. He wished to obtain from the Indian some more precise explanations, but the fumes of the opium gradually clouded Hurruck's mental faculties; his eyes became fixed, haggard, brilliant, and wandering; a harsh rattling breath escaped his parched lips, hardly human in their expression. It was in vain that Eusebius pressed the Indian with questions; the latter ceased even to notice him. His ecstasy assumed different forms, and his expressive face betrayed the different sensations through which he passed. Just as he was on the point of leaving the hut, he heard a great noise at the entrance, and, on crossing the threshold, perceived the notary Maës advancing towards him, accompanied by two individuals, strangers to Eusebius.

"Well," cried the notary to his young client, "what do you say to Meester Cornelis? Are you still determined to flee the joyous city, or do you think with me

that there is nothing like finishing a day of labour and anxiety by pleasure and amusement."

"There is very little that I see here to my taste, I confess, M. Maës," replied Eusebius; "and yet I shall not leave Meester Cornelis until I have had a few minutes' conversation with Hurruck."

"You will need a little patience in that case, then, for, if I am not very much mistaken, the rascal has been indulging in his favourite vice, and it will be some time before he descends to the earth again from the clouds in which he is at present soaring."

"How long is it likely his intoxication will last?"

"An hour or two; but when he returns to his senses he will be in such a deplorable state of torpor and dejection that he will be quite incapable of answering you."

"Where could I see him to-morrow?" said Eusebius, who, however desirous to learn the connection that had existed between Hurruck and Basilius, would not have been sorry to take leave of Meester Cornelis, and, in quitting him, to flee the exhibition of so many phases of unbridled passion.

"Where you could see him, do you say?" replied M. Maës. "Ask me where you will, to-morrow, find yon cloud now floating across the moon's silver disc, and it will be just as easy to tell you the one as the other. Hurruck is like the bird that lives in the marshes; it goes and it comes, and no one knows what day it will disappear, or what day it will return among us. Wait, therefore, until a few hours have enabled him to recover from his present state of stupefaction; and those hours will not appear too long if you employ them merrily with us."

"With you."

"Yes, with us; for I have recruited a couple of boon companions as well fitted as any one to make the time pass lightly. Allow me, therefore, with as little ceremony as we should use if we were in our good city of Amsterdam, to present to you Ti-koï, a wealthy Chinese gentleman, established in the immediate vicinity of Meester Cornelis, and my intimate friend."

The Chinese held out his hand, which Eusebius pressed, though certainly not with the best grace in the world; and the notary, stepping aside, unmasked the second personage he had brought with him. This was a Javanese, of nearly thirty years of age, dressed in a national costume of the most costly character, and whose headdress, daggers, and slippers were covered with diamonds.

"Don't fancy," continued the notary, "that I wish you to pass the evening in bad company. I have presented Plutus to you under the form of that fat Chinese with the baboon-like cheeks, with a white toga, and his plaited hair. I am now going to introduce you to a kind of demi-god of the old Javanese soil. This is the Tonan Thsermaï, Aria Karta de Bantam, the accredited descendant of the ancient sousonnams or sultans of Java, who, in spite of the Bedayas who charmed his ancestors' idle moments, is this evening of the same opinion as myself, that, for dancing to suit everybody's taste, the Rangouns are neither less fascinating nor less beautiful than their rivals."

The Javanese to whom M. Maës referred was about thirty years of age, with a broad open brow, black curly hair, and regular and handsome features; but the peculiar sharpness of his aquiline nose, the thinness of his lips, almost constantly drawn back and revealing a set of small, pointed, dazzlingly white teeth, gave to the whole character of his face a vague resemblance to that of a beast of prey.

He did not follow the example of the Chinese; and instead of holding out his hand to Eusebius, contented himself by a slight inclination of the head, and then turned round to the notary.

"Is this the man mentioned in the will?" he asked, with a singular smile, and sufficiently loud for Eusebius to hear the remark.

The notary replied in the affirmative, and not altogether in the best of humours; for, in the midst of his own unrestrained enjoyment, he did not forget the duties of his position, and remembered the promise he had made

Madame Van den Beck not to speak to her husband about the strange condition which the doctor had annexed to his bequest.

"What will is that man speaking of?" asked Eusebius, taking hold of the notary's arm and leaving the Chinese and the Javanese to walk on in front.

"Your uncle's, of course."

"What is there so very extraordinary in that will that everybody should seem to know its contents?"

"Confound it!" said the notary; "people don't make wills like that one every day in the week."

"M. Maës," said Eusebius, struck by the ironical expression which the notary's face also had assumed,—"M. Maës, you have concealed something from me. In the name of the kind feeling you have already shown towards me, in the name of my own rights if necessary, I charge you to tell me the truth."

"Confound the whole affair a thousand times!" returned the notary impatiently. "The subject don't deserve to be spoken of within the echoes of such a place as this! Do you want them to repeat the horrible jargon of law phraseology instead of the sweet and highly-spiced conversations they are accustomed to hear? Come to my office to-morrow, and, if you must know everything, you shall."

"No; you will return with me at once to Weltevreden, and on our way there you shall tell me all about it."

"Leave Meester Cornelis at this hour, when the wines of France are now being iced for our thirsty palates, when my boon companions rely upon me to join them! You can't think of such a thing, my dear sir."

"Do you intend to compare a want of politeness towards a vile Chinese and a pretended descendant of the sousonnams with a service which a countryman and a friend asks at your hands?"

"The devil take Doctor Basilius!" cried the notary, putting his hand with a gesture of despair to his head. "That man has discovered a means of tormenting his fellow creatures after his death. Come, come; there is a

way of conciliating all parties. I promise to tell you the truth; for sooner or later you must approve or reject Madame Van den Beck's acceptance of the inheritance; and I will tell you if you will only come and sup with us. In fact, such odd bequests as the one in question deserve to be read with the accompaniment of this whirl and confusion and in the midst of wine-cups and dances."

"But Esther is expecting me," said Eusebius, whose affection for his wife was opposed by his desire to see Hurruck again, and by his curiosity to hear what the notary had to relate."

"Bah! Your Esther will not be angry if you were to return home a little less anxious and moody than usual. Come along; and devil take it if, with the dessert that that infernal doctor's will has supplied us with, you do not go home laughing like a lunatic or like myself."

Eusebius, unable any longer to resist, followed the notary; and having joined the Chinese and the Javanese, they all bent their steps towards a small house brilliantly lighted up, situated in one of the corners of the grounds.

On their way thither, the beggar whom Eusebius had already relieved came forward as if he would again have spoken to him, but in passing the Tonan Thsermaï he slightly touched that important person's garment, whereupon the Javanese, raising a whip of rhinoceros hide which he held in his hand, let it fall upon the poor devil's shoulders, who uttered a loud cry of pain.

"Why do you strike the man?" asked Eusebius, touched with compassion.

"By what right do you ask an account of my actions?" exclaimed the Javanese prince.

"By the right of a man feeling enough to defend the weak against the strong who oppresses him."

"That is a very onerous task you have undertaken," replied the native, with an expression of extreme bitterness; "and I should have thought," he continued sneeringly, "that you would have had enough to do to defend

yourself, without taking any interest in that vile outcast of an abject race."

"All men are equal, all men are brothers," returned the European.

"No," interrupted Thsermaï, "men are not equal, nor are they brothers; the proof is, that the Europeans, your own countrymen, have, upon the continent, as well as in the Archipelago, despoiled the free and legitimate possessors of the land blessed by Heaven, which the sun endows with threefold productiveness. It well becomes one of the oppressors of our country to complain, when the Tonan Thsermaï, whose ancestors were high and mighty among the people, chastises one of the subjects their rapacity has left them."

"Thsermaï! Thsermaï!" exclaimed the notary, who knew the rigour with which the Dutch government repressed among the natives any allusion to their independence, and who was in a consternation at the turn which the conversation was taking.

"I am no subject of yours, son of the Adipates," said the beggar; "I am a Beduin, a faithful worshipper of Buddha. Your ancestors released mine from the obedience they owed them, when they denied their god for that of Islam. They sold their land to the men of the West; the peasant follows the land which is his mother, and I do not belong to you. As for you, and in spite of your cunning evasions, in spite of your duplicity, you are entering into a compact with those who are your masters: even were this land on the eve of becoming free again, you would be unworthy to resume the throne which your fathers occupied before you. You have raised your hand against me this day, Tonan Thsermaï; remember what I now tell you, that the time will come when my kriss shall be raised against you."

The Javanese prince, with a burst of rage, was about to throw himself again upon the poor beggar. The notary Maës and the Chinese merchant had the greatest difficulty to prevent him doing so. In the mean time the beggar approached Eusebius: "A short time since you placed

happiness in my hand, without calculating whether I should make a good or a bad use of it. In exchange I gave you a piece of advice; try to understand and to follow it. You interposed between that man's wrath and my back, and Argalenka the Beduin no longer owes you a simple counsel, but a real service. Ask what you please from me. Speak."

Considering the apparent miserable condition of the man, Eusebius hesitated; the beggar understood the meaning of his silence. "Do not judge me by my appearance," he said; "a common earthen vessel can contain, as well the most precious perfumes as the deadly juice of the Bohun-upas, the most terrible of all poisons. If you should some day want me, go and ask the echoes of the forest Tjidadal for Argalenka the Beduin."

With these words, to which Eusebius paid but an indifferent attention, the beggar moved hurriedly away, just as Eusebius's companions approached him.

"May I be hanged," said the notary, "if I ever knew any evening which gave me so much trouble to begin as this; I had hoped it would have been wholly devoted to pleasure, and it seems as if some evil genius were determined to overthrow all my plans. Come, be quick, a cup of French wine will set all this right again; and my friends Van den Beck and his Excellency the Tonan Thsermaï, under its generous influence, will shake hands without any more difficulty."

The table was laid in a kind of little cottage, built of materials as fragile as those of the hut where we left Hurruck, the serpent-charmer, sleeping off the effects of the opium. The cottage was decorated with a taste and attention to details which denoted that it was specially reserved for the Europeans or the wealthy natives who were in the habit of frequenting Meester Cornelis.

CHAPTER XIV.

The pavilion in question was constructed with the greatest elegance and refinement; it was divided into several small apartments by partitions of trellis-work, made of bamboo of a delicate and variegated pattern, alternating with different coloured panes of glass, furnished with large divans ranged against the walls of the room, and lighted by paper lanterns, covered with fantastic designs and drawings. At the extremity of the largest of these compartments, a kind of platform was raised, serving as a theatre or stage for the Rangouns, when the wealthy guests of Meester Cornelis were desirous of seasoning their repasts by this curious spectacle.

The table was spread with native and European dishes, soup of swallow-nests, sea-slugs, sharks' fins cut into thin slices, rissoles of addled eggs, and in addition to the usual boiled and roast meats after the Dutch fashion, splendid specimens of the best-flavoured fishes among the seven hundred and thirty-eight kinds which the neighbouring seas of the island supply in abundance; and, lastly, a great variety of game from the neighbouring plains and forests.

In spite of the scale on which the entertainment was supplied, in spite of the number of bottles which raised themselves aloft like steeples in the midst of the more substantial condiments of the table, the guests, with the exception of M. Maës, remained silent and cold.

While the attention of the Chinese was devoted to the table, the Javanese sat watching Eusebius, for whom, if he had not at the outset experienced a very warm sympathy, he had at least learned to regard with an evil eye, since his recent altercation with him. Eusebius was musing upon the singular incidents of the evening, which had brought him face to face with a man who seemed to

have known Doctor Basilius, the recollection of whom chilled him with horror.

"Gentlemen," said the notary, "one would think that we were present at a burial, rather than at a merry feast."

He then looked at Eusebius, and abandoning himself apparently to a sudden thought which lighted up his whole face, while a peal of laughter burst from his lips, so loud that the very lanterns hanging from the ceiling trembled again, he added, "Our supper will have something funereal about it, certainly, since it seems there is to be a question about a will in it."

"I hope, dear M. Maës," replied Eusebius, "that you do not intend to continue this jest any further; my affairs can hardly be expected to interest these gentlemen; and to communicate to me in their presence, what I require to learn, would, in my opinion, be carrying out very indifferently the object you no doubt have in view, namely, that of procuring them an agreeable evening."

"Listen, dear M. Van den Beck: there is a time for business, just as there is a time for nonsense. In my opinion, we could not select a better opportunity for talking over the business we have in hand than in the company of merry blades, with a cup of good wine in one's head, and the plump brown shoulders of the Rangouns in the perspective,—shoulders which glisten like the metallic corsets which imprison them."

"Besides, M. Van den Beck," observed the Chinese Ti-Koï, momentarily suspending the operation of the little ivory sticks which he made use of to convey to his mouth the rice which surrounded a grilled shoulder of mutton—"besides, the Sahib Maës has nothing very new to tell us with regard to this will."

"How so?" inquired Eusebius.

"There's not the slightest doubt," said M. Maës, "that the whole colony has already amused itself vastly at the expense of the final dispositions of the most honoured and honourable Doctor Basilius."

"The whole colony, do you say?" returned Eusebius,

" what do you mean? and how does it happen, M. Maes, that what takes place in your office can occupy the idle moments of all the ne'er-do-wells in Weltevreden."

" For goodness sake, don't speak of the office, I beg," said M. Maës, replacing on the table the glass he was about carrying to his lips; " you have positively taken away my desire to drink, and thrust down my throat the merry couplets which were about to spring forth like the champagne from this bottle."

" Very well, we will not allude to it again this evening; to-morrow I will pay you a visit in order to obtain the explanations I require as soon as there is a probability of finding a man there."

" And what am I now, Mr. Merchant, if you please?" asked M. Maës.

" Would you like me to answer you frankly, my dear notary?"

" Mirth and frankness are companions, my young friend, and you will oblige me very much by concealing nothing from me."

" Well, without referring in any way to the future, you give me the idea of having already thrust both your feet into the skin of a drunkard."

" To drink without being thirsty, and to be ready to make love at any moment," said the notary sententiously, " are the only things which distinguish man from the brute. It was a Frenchman who made that remark, and his name, if I mistake not, was Beaumarchais, and I am proud to think that I have married a woman of that nation! Confound it!" continued M. Maës, throwing his wine-glass against the wall, against which it was dashed to pieces, " I am speaking of Madame Maës; it is all your fault, M. Van den Beck; it was you who made me do it,—you are brutalizing me, positively."

" I should be delighted if by what you term being brutalized there was a chance of your recovering your reason. It is the longest way, I know; but another French proverb says: ' Every road leads to Rome.' "

" Reason!" exclaimed the notary; " what connection

can there possibly be between reason and a woman? Don't speak to me about my wife again, M. Van den Beck, or I shall revenge myself by saying that yours is not happy."

"In any case, M. Maës, I trust that Madame Van den Beck has not made you her confident."

"That is the very thing in which you are mistaken, my young friend."

"And she told you she was unhappy! I am surprised to learn that she has anything to reproach me with, unless it be for having once yielded to your pressing entreaties, and followed you to this place."

"It is much to be wished, for her sake, that you came here a little more frequently."

"I confess I don't understand you."

"In what do you suppose a woman's happiness consists?" asked the notary.

"In the affection and fidelity of her husband, I should say," replied Van den Beck.

At this reply the notary burst forth into a fresh peal of laughter, more formidable even than that with which the supper had commenced, and rolled about on his chair until it creaked again.

"An excellent joke!" he exclaimed. "Do you know that if happiness was really where you assert it to be, dear M. Van den Beck, Providence would have deprived nine-tenths of the female members of the human race of any chance of it? Ask the Saheb Ti-koï, who has three wives, and the Tonan Thsermaï, who has five-and-twenty, whether they have the slightest faith in such a receipt for their wives. Fidelity is subject to the influences of climate, upon which it is impossible domestic happiness can be entirely dependent; and that is the reason why I—who place happiness in a freedom from all anxiety of mind and heart, and who know from experience how contagious those feelings are—say, 'Be cheerful and happy, and your wife will be cheerful and happy, and those around you will have a smile upon their lips.' But how

can you expect any one to be light-hearted in the presence of a wobegone and dissatisfied expression of face? Come, M. Van den Beck, do you follow my advice for a few days, and you will soon see whether the face of your dear Esther will not very soon show the difference."

"Nonsense—you are mad; Esther would die of grief if she saw me leading the life you do."

"Bah! are you so very confident of preserving for your dear Esther, and during your whole life too, not only the fidelity of the senses, which is not much, but that of the heart, which is everything?"

"M. Maës, I trust the remark I am about to make will terminate a conversation which, to say the least, I regard as out of place in the present circumstances: 'Never shall my lips touch others than those which said "*Yes*" to me before Heaven.'"

"There is a proverb in our country," said the Javanese prince, addressing himself to Eusebius, "which says: 'Answer for the chastity of elephants, but not for that of men!'"

Seeing the conversation assume a direction which corresponded with his own constant thoughts, Eusebius changed colour. "But if," he continued, "my evil genius should decide that in this exciting climate my senses should be found weaker than my will, my heart I swear would never participate in that which I regard as a crime."

"If you wish to save your heart, take care of your eyes," said the Chinese sententiously.

"I am very thankful to see you in this frame of mind, dear M. Van den Beck," observed the notary, "for that places me quite at my ease, and, notwithstanding the objections which your wife made, I no longer hesitate to inform you of the conditions which Doctor Basilius placed upon his liberality."

"Devil take Doctor Basilius," cried the Javanese; "don't bother M. Van den Beck now, but postpone the communication of that old fool's folly till to-morrow.

Look, a few minutes ago his face was as bright as the sun at sunrise, while now the clouds have begun to gather over it at your remark."

"Come, let us have something more to eat," said the Chinese.

"No, to drink," replied the notary like an echo; "we will postpone business till to-morrow, but on one condition, that M. Van den Beck will give me satisfaction in a glass of sparkling wine."

Eusebius, unaccustomed to these orgies, soon began to get confused; he had hardly drunk more than two or three glasses, and yet he had grown so animated during the previous conversation that the blood which flowed violently to his brain communicated a sort of stupor to his whole frame.

The Javanese prince, although he had scarcely drunk anything, seemed to have forgotten his quarrel with the Dutchman, and to be influenced in his bearing towards him by feelings of the greatest courtesy.

"Throw the wine aside, M. Van den Beck," he cried, "it swells the stomach and oppresses the heart. Here," he added, taking from the hands of one of his servants a pipe of jasper very curiously carved, "taste this; and if Heaven has placed happiness anywhere within the reach of man's hands, it is certainly in the juice of the white poppy. Taste this, and upon the clouds of its perfume-laden smoke your soul will ascend towards those azure regions peopled with the loveliest of their sex."

Eusebius had seen the effects of the opium upon Hurruck, and had conceived the profoundest disgust at the exhibition; still, he felt that he could hardly refuse the offer of the Javanese, made with so much politeness, and taking the pipe in his hand, he put it to his lips.

At this moment a loud noise of gongs and other musical instruments was heard outside, and the four guests hurried towards the door to see the cause of the disturbance. They perceived a dense crowd surrounding a man perched upon a kind of cane seat, borne upon the shoulders of four Javanese, who, as well as the crowd which followed in

their wake, were shouting in the wildest manner, as if in triumph.

"What is the matter?" asked M. Maës of a Chinese who was passing by the pavilion, with his head hanging down in the greatest dejection, and carrying under his arm the implements which constituted the stock in trade of a keeper of a gaming-table.

"What is the matter, do you say, sahib?" replied the Chinese in a surly tone; "a pig stuffed full of gold is the matter,—a dog of a Beduin has carried off everything I have been scraping together with so much labour during the year I have been keeping the bank here, my Madras piastres, my Dutch florins, and has left me penniless. May the hand of Siva be upon the thief who has stripped me of my all."

"Happily for you, Siva has been deaf to the curses of the players, my friend," said the notary; "for had such not been the case, you would have been hanged a long time ago."

The Chinese walked away grumbling.

"The winner is coming this way," said the Javanese; "those rascals are so delighted to see the gambling-table keeper a loser in his turn, that, to look at them, one would fancy they all had some of his gold in their pockets."

In fact, upon a sign which the winner had made to those who were carrying him along in triumph, the procession were making their way towards the pavilion where M. Maës's guests were taking supper. Eusebius looked on in astonishment, for he had just recognized, in the man seated upon the palanquin, the beggar who had a few hours before been the recipient of his charity. The winner, on his side, seemed earnestly bent in looking for Eusebius, for as soon as he perceived him, he leaped down from the litter and ran towards him with his money-bag under his arm. "Sahib," he said, entering without the slightest hesitation into the banqueting-room, where his rags formed a strange contrast with the luxurious furniture, "your charity has brought me luck; I have gold."

With these words, he emptied upon the table, amidst the plates and glasses, the bag, containing about twenty thousand florins, in various kinds of coin, and made them into two piles, which the Chinese and Javanese looked at with eager curiosity,—a curiosity which offered a singular contrast to the indifference and apathy of the two Dutchmen.

"There is one share for you, and one for me," said the man; "choose which you please."

"We Christians," replied the young Dutchman, "when we give away anything in charity, do not look for any return in this world; it is in heaven yonder we expect to find our reward."

"Buddha has not given the earth to men to spurn!" replied the gambler; "he is rich enough, and powerful enough, to bestow upon those he loves the joys of this life, and of the life to come as well."

"Do not insist upon it, for were there a thousand times more gold than that I see upon the table,—even were I as poor and destitute as you seem to be, I would take nothing which came from such a source."

The man bowed his head. "Young man," he said, "be not so hasty to condemn those whose hearts you have not fathomed; wait before you judge me: if, however, you will not take this money, give it to the poor; for you are indeed he whom Buddha showed me in my dream; and in that dream he told me to divide whatever I gained, with him who should place in my hand the piece of gold, to which I should owe the gold I asked him for."

"Beduin," interrupted Thsermaï, advancing towards him, while M. Maes, taking Eusebius aside, was telling him how blindly the Javanese believe in their dreams, and how useless it would be for him to continue any further opposition to the wish of the ragged gambler; "Beduin, I am surprised to find you have not made three shares instead of the two which I see upon the table."

"Why three shares?"

"Because one belongs to me as your lord and master;

have you forgotten, son of a dog, that I am the papatis of the province of Bantam ?"

"I had not forgotten it, Tonan Thsermaï; for as true as the eye of Buddha lightens the whole world, it is not one portion alone of this gold, but all the gold which was intended for you; and it was to increase your treasure that I prayed unto Buddha for nights and nights together; it was to place it at your feet that I first of all accepted alms from a white woman, that I afterwards supplicated charity from this young nobleman, and lastly that I entered this place, fouler, in my eyes, than the marshes of Kavang."

"And what do you think I should give you in exchange for this gold ?"

"The freedom of one of the bedayas, with which your palace is thronged."

"Do you hear that, gentlemen ?" said the Javanese to his companions, "while this old white-bearded heathen has been invoking the name of Buddha, and boasting of the purity of his sect, he has been casting his eyes upon one of the houris in my palace."

The beggar bowed without further reply; while the Javanese prince cast a greedy glance at the heap of gold and silver pieces.

"But the least of the bedayas of my palace at Bantam is worth far more than your heap of gold, old man," replied Thsermaï.

"And yet it is not the youngest nor the prettiest that I wish to carry off."

"That is all right, then," cried the notary; "I like your frankness; and a score of florins more is all that is needed to satisfy your master, Thsermaï; I will pay them out of my own pocket, provided I am allowed to be present when you choose your bedaya."

"If, indeed, you had not already given away part of your winnings to this foreign gentleman."

"Buddha has said, 'You shall never dispose of that which does not belong to you.'"

"What do you mean ! the gold is yours," said the

Chinese in a low tone, "since this young madman will not accept it."

Eusebius contemplated this scene with a curiosity easy to understand; he could not comprehend the man's disinterestedness, since he saw him animated at the same time by such coarse instincts.

"One moment," said he, advancing; "I was wrong in the first place to give away money which was destined for the gratification of a shameless passion; and I should be more so in encouraging another: this gold is mine, Beduin, and I shall keep it."

The beggar cast a look at the young Dutchman, half of entreaty, half of reproach, and then turned towards the Javanese. "Be satisfied with this, I implore you," he said, clasping his hands together; "if I had more I would give you more."

"Ah! ah! ah! this old lover of the yellow flowers in Thsermaï's garden is very droll; come, Thsermaï, let him gather one," said the notary.

"No," replied the Javanese; "the most that I can do for him in exchange for this gold, is to give him his freedom."

"That freedom is already mine, for I have taken it, Tonan Thsermaï; since your lieutenant robbed me of the soil which was mine, burnt my cabin, and tore from me that which was more precious than all—my daughter,—the yellow lily of the Lebak, I have snapped asunder the bonds which united me to my master; the freedom you now offer, is mine already; and now I have no master but the tigers and the black panthers of the forest of Tjidadal. Adieu!"

"Argalenka!" cried the Javanese whose face had become livid under its swarthy complexion; "you are Argalenka, the father of Arroa! Ah! I understand now why you wished to choose from my bedayas."

Argalenka quitted the room without listening to this reply.

"Take your money with you," cried Eusebius.

"When it is insufficient to buy my child's freedom

what do I care for it?" said the beggar, hurrying away into the darkness, with a gesture of despair.

When Eusebius found that the old man had wished to remove his daughter from Thsermaï's seraglio, he was overwhelmed with despair at what he had done. The guests had again seated themselves at the table, and the gold which Argalenka, in his sense of justice and equity, had destined for his benefactor, lay opposite to Eusebius, who thrust it hastily towards the Javanese.

"Take this money," he said to the latter, "and restore his daughter to that poor devil."

"We are getting sentimental, I see," said the notary, who during the last few minutes seemed to be in a very bad humour; "the devil take the Beduin, gambling, and all connected with it."

"M. Van den Beck," said Thsermaï, in answer to the young Dutchman's remark, "I hope you will pay me a visit at my residence at Rendang; you shall then see Arroa, and shall yourself decide whether she is one a man can easily renounce."

"But, after all," said the Chinese, "what is to be done with this money? M. Van den Beck will take his own share, of course; but it occurs to me that the Beduin's share may very easily be divided among us all."

"For shame!" said the notary; "these Chinese are worse than Jews. I will show you what ought to be done with it, and how we can amuse ourselves with this vile metal, M. Ti-Koï."

And taking a couple of handfuls of the money from the heap before him, M. Maës threw them into the open space before the pavilion.

The various persons who were idling and lounging about had no sooner observed what the notary had done, than they ran forward in all directions, and, snatching hold of lanterns and lighted torches, links and wisps of straw, threw themselves upon the money which lay scattered in the dust. At the tumult which

arose all the loungers and idlers at Meester Cornelis's hurried forward from every side.

The opium-smokers, enervated by the absorbing delights in which they had been indulging, were the only persons who remained quietly in their places, and were the only persons absent from the *fête* which M. Maës had just extemporized for the *habitués* of the place. The players quitted the gaming-tables, the musicians their instruments, the Rangouns themselves hastened forward still clothed in their dancing costume. M. Maës filled both his large hands a second time with the coin, and sent them to join the first. It was no longer a throng, but a *mêlée*, where blows showered thick and fast in all directions; where, according to the age, sex, and strength of the combatant, every one attacked and defended himself or herself with fists, feet, nails, and teeth; sarongs torn into shreds, fragments of clothes, gold and silver coin, flowers torn from the heads of the dancing-girls, soon strewed the ground and were not long before they were stained with blood.

The louder the cries and shrieks arose amid this infernal confusion, the more M. Maës's delight seemed to increase; he threw the money wildly about, preferring those places where the crowd was more violent, the cries shriller. The notary seemed excessively amused at this odious spectacle, and accompanied every imprecation which proceeded from the mob with a burst of laughter or a merry jest. He turned round to supply himself with a tenth provision of this novel kind of projectile, when, to his great surprise, he perceived he had completely exhausted not alone the money which the Beduin had repudiated, but also that which belonged to Eusebius.

"Is it possible there is no more left? What a pity! I fancy I have rather infringed on your share, M. Van den Beck; but you will not be angry with me, for I think the best use you could possibly have made of that money was to amuse those poor devils with it."

"You call that amusing them?" said Ti-Koï bitterly, who regretted exceedingly that a regard for his own

dignity had precluded him from taking part in a struggle which he had watched with such eager attention.

"Look at me; I have laughed so heartily that I am in a perfect perspiration. Capital, there is one piece left," continued M. Maës, seizing a double gold piece which had slipped between a couple of plates.

The notary was on the point of converting it into a fresh element of discord among the guests of Meester Cornelis, when Eusebius checked his arm.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but be good enough to leave me that; I wish to keep it to see if what Buddha has sent me will bring me luck."

"Well," said the Chinese Ti-Koï, "considering what you have done for them, the least the Rangouns can do is to come and dance for us."

M. Maës applauded the proposition most vehemently, and in a few moments the poor girls, having arranged as well as they possibly could their dresses which had been torn in the struggle, returned to the pavilion and took their places upon the platform at the end of the apartment.

Hurruck entered the banqueting-room at the same time, and sat down among the musicians.

While M. Maës was amusing himself with the crowd, Eusebius had been using every argument and means of persuasion to induce the Tonan Thsermaï to restore to Argalenka his daughter; and the former, without making any distinct promise, had replied so politely to his representations, that the prospect of doing a good action rendered the young Dutchman more light-hearted than he had been the whole evening; and although the exhibition in course of preparation was very little to his own taste, he did not talk any more of retiring.

The dancers had seated themselves in a circle round the little theatre, and waited for the signal to commence the performances. Eusebius's glance, passing carelessly over the fascinating group, fell upon a young girl whose white and red complexion and fair hair, contrasting with the copper-coloured skin of her companions, attracted his

attention. It seemed as if this girl's face was not unknown to him, and he was endeavouring to recollect where he could possibly have seen her before, when Thsermaï, rising, summoned Hurruck to him.

CHAPTER XV.

"DRINK, Ti-Koï," said M. Maës to his neighbour, the Chinese, whether it be wine or *tsiou*, the result is just the same. M. Thsermaï, has your heart been softened by the reproaches of your Imaum, and have you sworn never again to infringe the laws of your holy prophet? You are this evening in a most preposterous and dangerous state of sobriety; the couch upon which you and poor M. Van den Beck are seated, resembles one of those ice-banks crowned with snow in the Australian seas. I verily believe that it is you who have communicated your reserve to this festive-board, which you know I particularly begged you to do your best to enliven."

"Do not take any notice of us, M. Maës," replied Eusebius; "you will soon have enough to do to look after your own actions."

"Devil take them! I don't intend to do anything of the kind; I shall let them take their chance, like birds lost in a tempest. The unexpected and the fantastic are my delight."

"You are right, wise mandarin," exclaimed Ti-Koï like an echo; "nothing is brighter or livelier than a cascade; but why do not the cascades in my garden roll down rivers of tsiou, instead of unwholesome water? Tsiou has been given us by the gods, with a view to transporting us to their abodes upon wings of flame."

"Yes, until we fall into the mud again," returned the notary; "but what does that matter, it is always something to have seen, if only for a minute, the sleeping

apartments of beings more ethereal than ourselves. Worthy statue of wisdom and sobriety, presiding at our absurdities," continued M. Maës, addressing Eusebius, "will you refuse a glass of this constantia, if I propose to dedicate it to the eternal duration of your affection for the young and charming woman who is the object of it?"

"The best means to avoid compromising the eternity you allude to, is to refuse your toast, M. Maës; and it is to my exceeding regret that I feel obliged to do so."

"The man is positive marble, which leaves me very little anxiety with regard to the consequences of the will," cried the notary; "but the wine is poured out, and must be drunk. Ti-Koï, I charge you to see this done."

The Chinese refused; like all his countrymen, he disdained the vintages of Europe, and preferred his grain-extracted brandy.

"This is better," he said, holding up his glass full of tsiou.

"Wretch! how can you assert so vile a heresy! Don't fancy that your scoundrelly gods ever put such trash into their insides. I look upon you, M. Van den Beck, as the cause of my ears having been shocked with such a blasphemy; but, at all events, if I cannot intoxicate your brain, I will dazzle your eyes. Come, you Rangouns there, dance, and dance in such a way as to bring this man to your feet, praying, beseeching, and stammering, like a child who wishes for a plaything."

The supper offered by M. Maës to Eusebius and the two Asiatics had suddenly assumed a complexion in harmony with the manners of the place, and the amphitryon of the feast was doing his utmost to give to it its peculiarly local tone.

The spectacle, which had been procured through the money belonging to the Beduin Argalenka, had excited and heated him excessively; and he found nothing better adapted for the purpose of cooling himself than emptying a bottle of champagne into an enormous china bowl, and swallowing it at a draught. This notion, however, was very far from producing the result he was desirous of

attaining ; for no sooner had he swallowed it than his face changed from a bright vermilion to a deep brick-red, and his loquacity increased in proportion to the rapidity with which his blood, accelerated by the alcohol, circulated through his veins.

In obedience to his orders, the dancers executed a few figures ; while, as an accompaniment to the musicians, he roared out a Dutch Bacchanalian song, the inspiration, doubtlessly, of some United Provinces poet under the influence of the thick and dispiriting fumes of beer, with a rhythm full of plaintiveness and monotony—a song which contrasted not only with the singer's physiognomy, but with the light and cheerful cadence, despite its wildness, of the instruments in the orchestra.

With a view of beating time, M. Maës flourished the long pig-tail depending from his Chinese friend's head ; and the movements which he thus communicated to the large straw hat with which Ti-koï's head was covered excited his mirth prodigiously. Never did any nodding or bowing figure of a mandarin present a more ludicrous effect.

Ti-koï vibrated in his chair at every pull, and seemed on the point of falling under the table ; but his favourite beverage had operated so effectually upon his senses, that he hardly seemed to be aware of what was passing ; his face had assumed an expression of the most utter vacancy, his eyes alone retaining anything of their cunning and shrewdness.

Judging from the reproaches with which the notary overwhelmed them both, it would appear that Eusebius Van den Beck and the Javanese Thsermaï alone preserved their senses.

They had both repeatedly refused to drink—a refusal opposed to the habits of the Javanese prince, addicted, like all his race and rank, to the most unrestrained personal indulgence ; but on this occasion—singular circumstance !—despite the pressing representations of the notary, he had merely put his lips to his glass, and had even refused the pipe of opium prepared for him by his servants ;

or if he took it from their hands, it was merely to offer it to the young Dutchman, and to persuade him to renew the acquaintance he had already made with the virtues of this narcotic.

Eusebius, engrossed by the arrival of the Beduin Argalenka, had not experienced any of the ordinary effects of the opium; but the appearance of those who surrounded him, and the recollection of the besotted state of intoxication which he had witnessed in Hurruck's instance, excited his profoundest disgust; he refused, politely, but with a firmness sufficient to preclude his new acquaintance from renewing his pressing solicitations.

Notwithstanding the confident anticipations of M. Maës, the dancing of the Rangouns and their graceful attitudes produced no impression upon Eusebius; in the midst of the festivity, as when immersed in his daily avocations, his mind was wholly and ceaselessly occupied with the singular personage whose appearance had so terribly affected his existence; and a kind of secret instinct, no less than the ambiguous phrases which had escaped Hurruck, convinced him that he was among persons who had known Basilius, and who could assist or destroy him in the struggle in which he had embarked.

If Eusebius was insensible to the fascinations of the dark and fair skinned Rangouns, with M. Maes it was the very reverse. Just as the figure was approaching its termination, when the greater number of the dancing-girls, worn out with fatigue, had sunk down on the stage, and when two or three of their number still continued their graceful attitudes with feverish energy, the burly notary jumped from his seat, and with a single bound cleared the balustrade which separated the guests from the dancers, and advanced towards them, curving his arms as gracefully as it was possible for a man of his colossal stature to do, and looking as if it were his intention to invite one of the dancers to associate him in the figure she was executing at that moment. The Rangoun, who was the very same fair-complexioned, fair-haired girl whom Eusebius had remarked, seemed terrified at the

appearance of the European, and, with a powerful and prodigious bound, sprang back with a gesture of alarmed modesty. Such of her companions as were not thoroughly exhausted by fatigue advanced towards the notary, and redoubled their blandishments, glancing at him with their sparkling, liquid eyes, as if they disapproved of their companion's prudery, and were ready to replace her.

But the notary, disdaining their solicitations, still advanced towards the one who had first challenged his devotion. The girl fled from him with a pantomimic grace, which had the effect of redoubling the ardour of the burly Dutchman, who endeavoured to bring his recollection of the opera at the Hague into play, by throwing himself into some of the amorous and imploring attitudes he had seen executed by the French dancers in the ballets of M. Mazillier.

There was something irresistibly droll in the attitudes and pantomime of this burly man, dressed in European fashion, amidst the dazzling and variegated costume of those swarthy girls of Java; the expression which he endeavoured to give to his purpled face was so amusing, that even Eusebius could not help joining in the mirth it provoked, and of adding his share to the bravos with which the spectators and actors received the little interlude which had just been extemporized by M. Maës.

This scene had the required *dénouement*. M. Maës succeeded in reaching the fair Rangoun, and kissed her twice loudly on the cheek. Then drawing a handful of florins from his purse, he let them fall in a shower on the young girl's head, whence they fell upon the stage. "Here, bring something to drink," he cried, "not only for myself, for I am stifling, but for these girls as well; it will give them strength to go on again presently." Several bottles of wine and tsiou were brought upon the stage, and M. Maës constituted himself the cup-bearer for the Javanese beauties.

"Among all those men and women there is one, I feel sure, who will not touch what your countryman is so

generously distributing at this moment," said Thsermaï to Eusebius Van den Beck.

"Who is that?" replied the latter; "these slaves seem to devote themselves to what is provided for them with the same avidity as their master does."

"Hurruck will not touch them," replied Thsermaï, pointing with his finger to the serpent-charmer, who was seated in a corner of the room behind the musicians, with the baskets containing his reptiles beside him.

And so it proved, for when one of the musicians, who held the cup in his hand, offered it to Hurruck, and the notary was on the point of filling it, the Gueber rejected it with an air of disgust. "Come here, Hurruck, come here," said Thsermaï; "and now tell me," he continued, pointing first to the pipe and then to a glass; "which is better of the two, this or that?"

"The one degrades a man to the level of the beasts, the other raises him to an equality with the spirits of the air; no man of any sense could hesitate a moment," replied the serpent-charmer, seizing hold of the calumet, and inhaling with intense gratification a few whiffs of the opium.

"Yes," said Eusebius, delighted at a circumstance which promised him an opportunity of becoming more intimately acquainted with the very man he wished, and particularly of asking him certain questions about Doctor Basilius; "yes, I have already had an opportunity of learning what Hurruck's tastes are; indeed, I am astonished to see him so soon recovered from the deep lethargy in which he was sunk only an hour ago. But are you not afraid, Hurruck, that the repeated use of this drug will end by injuring your health."

"Life is not reckoned by the days of which it is composed, but by the enjoyments which it promises."

"Bravo, Hurruck," called out the notary; "admirably said, upon my word; there is more sound sense under your tawny skin, which shines like our milkwomen's cans at Amsterdam, than in the brains of many a philosopher; the first time you come to Weltevreden, call upon me,

and I will give you a piece of the very best opium cake which ever left the plains of Mesimar; but take care not to make your appearance before night-fall: do you hear, my good fellow?"

"Yes, sahib; I will wait until it is so dark that no one could tell whether a man was drunk or sober," replied Hurruck, with an accent of perfect simplicity.

"Come and see me too," said Eusebius, assuming an air of perfect indifference, although he was exceedingly desirous not to allow this opportunity escape of contriving an interview with Hurruck; "if I do not promise you any opium, I will take care that you shall be none the less satisfied with my generosity."

"Capital idea of yours," said the notary; "you will introduce him to Madame Van den Beck; he will tell you some admirable stories."

"Do you suppose," cried the Javanese; "that Madame Van den Beck will put any faith in such childish nonsense?"

"Nonsense, do you say? that is quite a new word in the mouth of a Javanese, when it refers to matters of witchcraft; and I should have thought it would have been difficult to find any gentleman wearing a sarong who was not a firm believer in dreams, prognostics, enchantments, spells, and other mysteries which belong to the black art."

"You are right," replied Thsermaï bitterly; "we natives are like the zebra of the vast woods and prairies whom no amount of care or training can tame; to no purpose was it that my father did his utmost to make me acquire, through a wise teacher of your nation, knowledge of various kinds; he did not succeed in making a man of me, since my skin is not white."

"At all events he has succeeded in making a liar of you, Seigneur Thsermaï," said the notary.

"A liar! I!" exclaimed the Javanese, bounding from his seat.

"Yes, you! for you have just been boasting of not believing in witchcraft, and I now remember that when

I paid my last visit to you at Bantam, I saw you throw some fresh earth against the walls of your palace, to prevent anything unlucky happening to it during your absence."

"M. Maës," exclaimed the Javanese, who seemed still more annoyed at the recollection which had just been evoked than at the preceding instance of incivility; "M. Maës, you insult me."

"Bah! surely you are not going to propose a duel! I am quite ready to accept it, and although I have got as much as I can conveniently carry, I have no objection to try which of the two will drink the most wine. We have our witnesses, although there is one of them," he added, knocking Ti-Koï's hat over his eyes, for the Chinese was leaning on the table fast asleep; "whom it would be more just to reckon as a dead man."

"M. Maës," said Thsermaï, his eyes sparkling with fury, and his lips white and contracted; "I never jest except with my equals."

"In that case you must remain among those you consider such; you won't be much embarrassed to find them in this island."

At this fresh insult the Javanese put his hand to his creese, and attempted to scale the table for the purpose of throwing himself upon the notary. Hurruck, who from the moment he had possession of the pipe, had seated himself upon the matting which covered the floor by the side of Eusebius, and whom in hurrying forward Thsermaï had roughly thrust out of his way, made no attempt to stop him; but Eusebius seizing hold of his arm succeeded in checking him.

"Leave him alone, Van den Beck, let him treat his dagger to an air bath if he likes; don't make yourself uneasy, he has no wish to see the colour of my blood. There are too many witnesses here. Ah! if we only happened to be alone in a wood, or if I were sleeping under his roof under the faith of his hospitality, it would be different."

At this fresh insult the rajah became livid, and foamed

at the mouth with passion; he made an effort to free himself from Eusebius's arms which he had thrown round him, but feeling that that was impossible, he cried; "Listen to what I say, M. Maës, it will not be in a wood, nor under the shelter of my roof when sleeping there under the faith of hospitality, that I will strike you; but in the spot you call Kæming's Place, in broad daylight, and in presence of witnesses far more numerous than those in this room."

The only answer the notary at first condescended to make, was to thunder out once more his Bacchanalian air, and then suddenly breaking off in the middle, he exclaimed; "A thousand devils! this evening must surely have been begun under evil auspices; that young lunatic began, by talking to me about Madame Maës, and, naturally, that ended in a dispute: she always brings me ill luck; and our evening is spoilt just as it was becoming so agreeable. Look at those poor Rangouns, who are hiding themselves under their sarongs like so many frightened gazelles. Pardieu! M. Thsermaï, put up your tin dagger; your creese, which can only frighten women, will run the risk of being dishonoured." The Japanese still continued to preserve his menacing attitude.

At this moment one of his servants, an old man wearing a brown sarong, and a turban whose large folds fell over his eyes, and whose face was covered with a thick, white beard, approached the young, native prince, and addressed a few words to him in the Malay tongue, which, owing to the low tone in which the words were spoken, no one but Thsermaï could understand. The latter replied in the same language, darted a glance full of the bitterest hate at the two Dutchmen, and with an incredible mobility of feature his face immediately resumed its calm aspect, and he threw himself back on the couch. "I must have been mad," said he, addressing himself to Eusebius, "to have paid any attention to what is said by a man overtaken by wine."

"Excuse me, your excellency," interrupted the notary, laughing, "you probably mean a man who has taken, and

not been overtaken by wine." The Javanese returned no answer.

"Look after your Rangouns," said Eusebius, hoping that the sight of the dancing would divert the attention of the two champions, and would make them forget a cause of quarrel which seemed very far from being at an end; "for so warm an admirer of dark beauties as yourself, I think you allow your attention to be drawn aside very easily."

"You're right, Van den Beck, and the smallest look from the least pretty of these bayadères is better than anything I could ever get out of this young savage. Come, lovely maidens, dance us the djinn, as a worthy termination of this evening."

While Eusebius was talking with M. Maës, and the notary was encouraging the Rangouns with gesture and voice, Thsermaï had addressed himself to Hurruck in the dialect which his venerably bearded servant had used to calm his master's anger. "Hurruck," he said, "the nets are spread in the dark, and you have only to drive forward the prey to entangle it in the meshes." The Javanese accompanied these words by a gesture which showed Hurruck that Eusebius Van den Beck was the person he alluded to.

"The bold hunter calls no one to his assistance," replied Hurruck in a surly tone; "he walks along in his own strength and intrepidity, and alone attacks the black panther in his jungle."

"We want you, Hurruck; the Dutchman suspects Tonan, and would accept nothing from his hand; be with us to-day, in order to be with us when the hour of the carnage and booty shall have struck."

"Hurruck lives upon the fruits which ripen for him upon the trees, upon the water which dashes over the white stones of the brooks: the feasts you speak of, when men, like tigers, rend with their nails and gnaw with their teeth the warm palpitating flesh of their fellow-creatures. are not for him to join in."

"Hurruck is greatly changed since that night when, in

the forest of Tjidadal, the true believers swore that the men of the north, who had robbed them of their native soil, should die."

"Hurruck did not repeat the oath he heard others pronounce on the night you refer to, Tonan Thsermaï. What does it matter to Hurruck who possesses the land in which he will have no share? A ray of the sun which gladdens his eyes and warms him in the morning under his mean sarong, is the only joy he cares for; the children of Islam and the votaries of Christ have not yet pretended to appropriate to themselves any right over the rays of the sun."

"Hurruck, your lips do not speak the truth. You have some reason for defending this Dutchman: he has seduced you with his gold." Thsermaï was about to continue; but the man in the brown sarong, who had already spoken to him, approached the Gueber, and observed him narrowly for a few minutes.

While answering the Javanese, Hurruck had never taken his eyes off the Rangouns. As Thsermaï's retainer followed the direction of the Gueber's gaze, he detected the dancing-girl, who seemed to have fascinated the serpent-charmer's attention. He touched him slightly on the shoulder with his finger. Hurruck started as if he had taken in his hand one of the electrical fishes of the northern seas. "Does the serpent-charmer," he said, addressing Hurruck in the Malay dialect, "suppose that the lovely dancer with the fair skin and with the flowers of the malatti in her hair, is the sister of the Dutch merchant by his side?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because you treat as a friend, as a brother, the man whose skin is of the same colour as the fair Rangoun."

"Who taught you to read in my heart?" said Hurruck, whose eyes closed, as he answered his questioner, in the same way that the golden eyeballs of his own serpents became veiled when he exercised his power of fascination over them.

"To read in your heart is a mere trifle to him who rules spirits and reigns over the elements."

"And you are that one?"

"You have said it."

"Furnish me with a proof of it."

"Take this," said the man in the brown sarong, seizing a crystal goblet from the table and filling it with water, and then pouring into it one drop of a greenish-coloured liquid out of a little gold bottle which he drew from his breast. "And now," he continued, "look." Hurruck obeyed; and in the water he gazed upon, which assumed the various tints of the opal, a singular and beautiful spectacle was unfolded before him. The lovely Rangoun was lying upon a couch strewn with flowers: her gauze garments scarcely hid her rounded form; her eyes, blue as the azure of the heavens, gazed around her; she stretched out her arms towards another figure, misty and undefined, but which gradually assumed a form Hurruck recognized as his own. A stifled cry burst from his lips, and he remained absorbed in the contemplation of that seductive vision, which faded slowly away and finally disappeared. "Alas! it was only a dream," he said, replacing the goblet upon the table.

"Which can, if you like, become a reality."

"You are going to ask me to commit a crime."

"Beings of my sphere do not commit crime, they merely take advantage of the faults and weaknesses of others; nothing more."

"What want you with me?"

"That you speak not and stir not."

"And the Rangoun will love me?"

"The Rangoun will be your own to-morrow, which is better still."

"But she is a free woman; how can you give her to me?"

"What matters that to you, provided she is yours?"

The serpent-charmer again glanced in the direction of the dancing-girl, who happened at this moment to be in front of her companions: her shoulders, as white as

alabaster, were admirably set off by the black-velvet jacket trimmed with gold which imprisoned her supple waist; she was balancing herself upon one leg, half-hidden by the folds of her long blue dress striped with silver, and moved in gentle cadence the golden rings fastened round her ancles. Hurruck passed his hand across his eyes as if to hide them from the vision, but stretching out his other hand towards the man in the brown sarong, he seized the pipe filled with opium which the latter had been offering him during the last few minutes, and carried it hastily to his lips. Thsermaï's servant then retired behind his master's couch. Nothing of what we have just been describing had attracted Eusebius's attention. At this moment a strange wild struggle was taking place between his senses and his will, between spirit and matter.

He perfectly well knew the manners, the habits, and customs of the Rangouns, and experienced no other feeling for them but one of disgust and aversion; yet, in spite of himself, his gaze seemed fascinated by the spectacle which was at that moment being enacted on the stage, and although he felt ashamed of the interest it excited in him, yet he was powerless to prevent it. He tried to collect his thoughts; he tried to evoke the image of his wife, to fix his thoughts upon his home at Weltevreden, where doubtlessly she was anxiously looking for his return, lying wakefully and watchfully with the muslin curtains stretched round her couch to protect her from the attacks of insects, looking like an angel in the clouds.

He succeeded merely in deceiving his imagination, but not in gaining the mastery over it. The nuptial chamber, Esther's chamber, faded away from his memory, and it seemed as if he had forgotten even its form and general appearance; but Esther herself, he still saw before him; the fair-haired dancing-girl who had attracted his notice gradually assumed the figure and features of the pure, chaste wife to whom he desired to devote his every thought; he fancied he still had Esther before him,

while it was the Rangoun whose every movement and gesture attracted his attention.

"You look as if you took a deep interest in this spectacle, M. Van den Beck," said the voice of Thsermaï, which tore him away from this delightful vision and recalled him to himself.

"You are mistaken, Seigneur Thsermaï," replied the latter, colouring violently; "my eyes alone were attracted, my heart sees not."

"Always the same—always thinking of your wife! I should like to know her very much, to be able to congratulate her."

"If you did know her, that which now seems extraordinary would appear to you very natural."

"Well," said Thsermaï, rising from his seat, "I see that the codicil of Dr. Basilius's will has no chance of taking effect."

"To-morrow, fortunately," replied Eusebius, smiling, "I shall no longer be exposed to hear this codicil spoken of without knowing what it means, if, indeed, our worthy friend M. Maës will have sufficiently resumed his professional character to oblige me with a perusal of it."

"There is no doubt you will know all about it by to-morrow; but I would recommend you, M. Van den Beck, not to expose yourself too frequently to the fascinations of these fairs fiends in motley garb; it is dangerous for your peace of mind, and equally so for your fortune." With these words the Javanese vaulted over the balustrade, and seated himself in the corner where the juggler had left his baskets, as if to watch the Rangouns more closely.

Eusebius, as much to avoid looking at the dancers as to avail himself of the opportunity of being alone with Hurruck, turned round towards the juggler. "Have you forgotten the promise I made you a little while ago?" he asked, "in case you should come and see me?"

Hurruck made no answer; he had inhaled a few whiffs of the pipe which the man in the dark sarong had handed

him, and which had probably been filled with a stronger narcotic than opium.

Insensibly life seemed to be withdrawn from his body and to have taken refuge in his brain. His fingers could hardly hold the tube of the pipe, his lips could hardly close over the mouthpiece to inhale the smoke, but his eyes shone with extraordinary brilliancy, and followed, with an expression of happiness and transport, the clouds of perfume which ascended slowly to the ceiling, as if his imagination had given them a form he dearly prized. He did not reply to Eusebius, who renewed his questions. At last the juggler turned slowly towards him, like a man who tears himself with difficulty from a pleasing picture.

"What does the European merchant want with me?" he asked, in a voice scarcely intelligible.

"That you do not forget, in the intoxication to which I perceive you are again about to abandon yourself, that I have promised you a present far more precious than that you will receive from the notary."

"If the European gives, it is because he wishes to receive," replied the juggler, who returned to the contemplation of the spirals of smoke, and who spoke in a chanting tone, as if murmuring a song; "those of his race buy and sell, they have quitted their own country to traffic in exile; it would be idle to make profitless presents. Who can tell what the European may not ask Hurruck?"

"Some information about Doctor Basilius."

"Doctor Basilius is a mighty spirit; he is rambling through space, while we are crawling on the face of the earth. He holds the key of all hearts in his hand, and will give Hurruck that which will open the heart of the girl yonder, whose hair reflects the bright rays of the setting sun, and whose eyes are of a darker blue than the blue flowers of Mantéga."

"What can he possibly mean!" exclaimed Eusebius, whose thoughts immediately flew to Esther, and who fancied that the juggler had intended to indicate his own

wife. "Can that ruffian have made such an infamous promise to you? That miserable wretch, Basilius, is still living, then, and the vision of the jetty of Tjiliwong was not a dream? Speak, Hurruck, speak!" he continued, seizing hold of the almost lifeless hands of the juggler; "whatever promises he may have made to induce you to associate yourself with his projects against me, if you —you, who, you say, have fathomed the mysteries of the world of spirits—will aid me in my task, I will give you gold, gold in heaps, if you will but speak."

Hurruck made an effort to throw off the torpor which was momentarily gaining a greater ascendancy over him, and barely left him the power of following in their flight the light phantoms which his imagination evoked. He looked fixedly at Eusebius, and murmured: "Man's vices are like the dank weeds which cover the marshes; a bird deposits a seed upon the bank of a limpid lake, it springs up, and a few months afterwards the azure plain is changed into a black and greenish sheet: he alone is strong who mistrusts others and himself."

"I understand you, Hurruck; you mean that I have been wrong to follow this mad fool Maës into this infamous place."

"The yellow leaves take the place of the green leaves; then the wind comes and carries them away, and whirls them into the roads. Is he wise who has sworn to preserve the livery of the spring during the season of rains, to remain on the branch he loves in spite of the wintry storms?"

"Yes; you condemn my faith and the eternity of my love."

"After having gilded the plains of the earth and the sea, after having fertilized the fields and caressed with its rays the bright flowers and glowing fruits, the sun sinks to rest in its bank of clouds, and the night succeeds. Can he be called wise who would rebel against the horror of the darkness, and would wish to see the sun again before the hour which the master of the world has marked with his finger for the returning light?"

"I ought to have resigned myself to the separation which Heaven required of me; I ought to have known that it would be but a momentary parting, and that the day was not far distant when I should find again, in that better world, her whom Heaven wished to deprive me of for a while."

"The Bohun-Upas gives death," continued the juggler, "can he be considered wise who, because he sees golden fruit among its foliage, sleeps tranquilly under its deadly shade?"

"I understand you now better, Hurruck," returned Eusebius. "Do you mean that I have been wrong in keeping the fortune which came to me from that accursed being? Speak no longer in parables, Hurruck, but explain yourself clearly, I entreat you."

"Hurruck has said all that he has to say," replied the juggler, over whose senses torpor was visibly creeping, and who was fast subsiding into that ecstatic slumber which characterizes the effects of opiates.

"No, you must speak," exclaimed Eusebius, shaking the Gueber violently. "Come, Hurruck, do not leave your task only half-completed; help me to escape the snares of this fiend."

The efforts and urgent entreaties of Eusebius were in vain; Hurruck's hand opened, the pipe of the Javanese fell upon the ground, where it was broke into a thousand pieces, and the juggler sank down upon the matting as if deprived of life; his eyes alone remained open, reflecting the various impressions which his mind was undergoing, and testifying that he was still alive. Eusebius Van den Beck started to his feet, and, to his great astonishment, the room, the guests, the dancers seemed turning round and round, in giddy confusion.

The narcotic with which the juggler's pipe had been filled was so powerful that the Dutchman, who had merely inhaled the fumes at a distance, had felt its influence. His giddiness was so violent that he attempted to leave the room, hoping that the night air would succeed in dissipating it. But, as soon as he attempted

to rise, it seemed as if a hand of lead was pressing on his shoulder and forced him to fall back again into his seat.

Thinking that the coolness of the water would restore the equilibrium of his senses, he seized a glass, but the water-bottle seemed to be dancing a saraband before him, and prevented him placing his hand on its neck; every time he advanced his hand to take hold of it, it escaped him by bounding aside.

One of Thsermaï's Javanese servants came to his assistance and filled his glass. No sooner had Eusebius emptied it than all that was vague confusion in his brain seemed to disappear; his intoxication seemed to assume a distinct form; he fancied he saw it gently half open the cavities of the bony structure of his skull and make its escape;—for a moment he experienced a sensation of extreme happiness and enjoyment, but his eyes returned of their own accord to the spectacle at which his heart and his reason had so much revolted, to what was passing upon the stage. The scene represented by the Djinns was approaching its *dénouement.*

Two Rangouns, who assumed the characters of votaries of pleasure, were attempting to win over to their views a young girl represented by the European dancer. By their gestures, strongly indicative of a love of enjoyment, they were striving to lead the girl to follow their example. The latter resisted, the expression of her eyes intimating that the happiness promised would be none for her, unless he whom she loved were there to share it. The language of her two companions was so ardent, so full of passionate entreaty, and their pantomime was descriptive of so much daring, that every moment the opposition of the resisting Rangoun was growing weaker; her features expressed the grief she was suffering, her eyes indicated that her heart was wholly absorbed by the memory of her absent lover; but in the material part of her frame resistance was becoming every moment weaker, and, with gestures of the most charming coquetry, the veils which, typically speaking, served her

as ramparts of resistance, were withdrawn one after the other.

Eusebius Van den Beck was completely absorbed by the fascination of this singular spectacle; his blood flowed tumultuously in his veins, his arteries throbbed violently, and at times he felt as if his heart would burst.

Suddenly he heard a wild, guttural cry behind him; he turned round, and looked at Hurruck. As before, the eyes alone of the juggler seemed instinct with life, but they had lost their exstatic and radiant expression, they were haggard, staring in wild affright, and fixed upon the stage. Eusebius followed the direction in which they were gazing, and perceived that three or four of the hideous reptiles which had been confined in Hurruck's baskets were crawling on the stage, among the dancers. He saw the European Rangoun, in one of the figures of the dance, place her foot upon the body of an enormous cobra-capello, which raised its head, swollen with wrath, and darted at her.

The dancer became pale as death, and seemed utterly deprived of movement, energy and life, as if the poison with which the serpent threatened her was already flowing in her veins. Actors, musicians, Rangouns, and guests flew to the door of the pavilion, uttering the wildest cries of terror, and made their escape in every direction. The only persons left in the room were the fainting dancer, Hurruck lying on the floor, and Eusebius. The idea of flying never occurred to the latter, for a moment; he sprang forward upon the theatre, and, seizing hold of the serpent, which had rolled itself round the arm of the dancing-girl, he whirled it round and round his head like a sling, so vigorously, that he did not give it time to turn round to bite him, and, having dashed its head against the side of the wall, returned to the dancing-girl.

The latter, without saying a word, pointed with her finger to a small wound above her shoulder, just where the neck unites with the bosom. From this wound a few

drops of blood, still bright and scarlet, were flowing slowly.

The room was empty ; it was useless to expect assistance from any one. Eusebius did not hesitate a moment, he applied his lips to the place the reptile had bitten, to extract, if it were still possible, the poison from the wound. But no sooner had his lips touched the white polished skin of the suffering girl than a strange revolution seemed to take place within him. Again did she assume in his eyes the face and height and form of Esther. It was Esther whom he thought he was holding almost dying in his arms. The illusion was so complete, that he fancied he was inhaling the perfumed skin of the woman he loved, that he seemed to hear her voice thanking him for his kindness. It seemed, too, as if this, his own Esther's face, was becoming paler and paler every moment ; the colour perished on her lips, her eyes closed, and life seemed fading away. How ardently he wished to revive the poor sinking frame, which was growing chilled beneath his touch, and, as he clasped her in his arms, his heart could count the beatings of hers, which throbbed only at rare and disconnected intervals.

Eusebius pressed his lips against the lips of the dying girl, as he had done in that fearful night when his young wife had been so miraculously restored to him, and suddenly his senses seemed to abandon him in sheer despair.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE system which governs the immense possessions of the Dutch, is both simple and ingenious. The government has retained, or restored, in the principal districts of the island, the Javanese feudatories, who formerly governed them, under native sovereigns. These functionaries,

who from their birth or their rank exercised from time immemorial a great influence over the peasants, have, for the sake of a little gold, placed this influence at the disposal of their conquerors, and have become their passive instruments. Charged at the present day with the transmission and execution of the orders of the colonial authority, they have distributed among the cultivators of the soil the taxes and imposts in such a way as to transform Java into a vast farm, to be worked for the advantage of Holland; a somewhat Machiavellian arrangement, whereby the hand that oppresses them is hidden, and withdrawn from the consequences of an immediate contact.

The ancestors of Thsermaï had, since the conquest of the island, been invested by the government with the functions of regent of the province of Bantam; his father, by his devotion in the great crisis of 1811, acquired the entire confidence of the Dutch, who had covered him with honours and wealth.

The Radin Adipatti wira natta Roeseema Bantam, suzerain prince of the villages in the province of Bantam went to Holland, and was presented to the king. He returned with the greatest admiration for the industrial pursuits of the country, and with a deep impression in favour of European civilization.

Although Mussulmans, in point of faith, since the fourteenth century, the Javanese do not share the jealous and exclusive fanaticism which characterizes the devotees of Islam. Consequently, the regent of Bantam had no dislike to overcome, no prejudices to remove, in confiding the education of his only son to a Christian.

It was the celebrated physician of Batavia, the same Doctor Basilius we have seen playing so important a part in the commencement of this story, to whom he intrusted this confidential office. Whether it was that his selection had been badly made, or that the instincts of the pupil were naturally and profoundly vicious, the poor governor of Bantam, before his death, had the misery of seeing his son deceive all the hopes he had built upon him.

The most apparent result of Thsermaï's European education, was that of adding to the vices which he derived from his race those which are peculiar to an advanced state of civilization, or to the decomposition of the moral order in old societies. He was jealous, vindictive, a profound dissembler, superstitious and credulous, like all the natives; he was, moreover, debauched, greedy of wealth and power, like the Dutch colonists; he would never have hesitated at the commission of a crime, if the crime would have been the means of administering to his passions.

He had left his tutor's hands but a very few months, when, on the death of his father, he succeeded him in his rank and dignities. His first care was to summon to his side the very man who, instead of checking or endeavouring to control, had stimulated, the evil propensities of his nature, and to instal this same person in his palace with the title of adviser. He had a numerous suite of servants, magnificent equipages, sumptuous palaces; there was nothing talked about in the whole province of Bantam, as far even as Buitenzorg, but the numerous ballet-dancers forming part of his household, and the personal qualities of the bedayas which composed it.

Notwithstanding the young prince's enormous revenues, they were barely sufficient for the extravagant expenditure occasioned by the unrestrained indulgence of his passions, and his ever-new and increasing caprices. To supply his wants, he had recourse to all kinds of exactions; to fill his harem, he carried off the daughters of his peasants. Complaints out of number were laid against him at the seat of the central government; but at head-quarters they were so leniently disposed towards him, out of remembrance and regard for his father, that the colonial authorities shut their eyes to his iniquities. Emboldened by the impunity he enjoyed and incited by the counsels of his former tutor, Thsermaï, not satisfied with despoiling those whom his father had regarded as his children, attempted to betray the confidence which the Dutch reposed in him, by appropriating to his own purposes a

portion of the taxes which had been collected under his direction on account of the treasury.

In this instance the government showed no pity, and an immediate removal from the offices he held followed this fresh delinquency. The adviser of Thsermaï, seriously compromised, was threatened with legal proceedings, and only escaped the confiscation of the considerable wealth he had amassed, as well in the service of the youthful sovereign of Bantam as in a kind of nefarious commerce which he carried on with the pirates of the isles of the neighbouring seas, by dying at the very moment that rigorous measures were being deliberated upon against him.

Remembering the services which the father had rendered to the colony, the governor-general of the island of Java did not desire that the son should issue from the affair completely despoiled of the hereditary superiority which his family had enjoyed; and it was accordingly stipulated, in the appointment of his successor, that a considerable pension should be allowed him. Neither the forbearance which had been shown him for so lengthened a period, nor this last act of munificence, nor the kind and conciliatory words with which it was considered expedient to accompany it, were able to calm the profound irritation which Thsermaï experienced at the rigorous measures adopted against him.

He pretended that he was descended from the royal stock of Pandjazaram, the last *souzonam*, or sultan, who reigned over the north and west parts of the isle of Java, and who had abdicated in 1749 for the benefit of the Dutch. He regarded the suzerainty of the province of Bantam, which had remained in his family as a compulsory compensation for that act of abdication, as an indefeasible and inalienable right of which nothing could deprive him, and he vowed an inextinguishable hatred towards those who had despoiled him of it.

For some time this hatred was only exhibited by imprecations and menaces; but since his descent from power, since the fairest source of his revenue had disap-

peared, Thsermaï, unable any longer to indulge in the ruinous fancies in which he so delighted, had endeavoured to divert himself in debauchery of the coarsest and grossest kind. As it was generally in the taverns of Batavia, or in the lax amusements of Meester Cornelis, that he recruited the confidants of his hatreds, the colonial government consequently paid no attention to his menaces, nor showed any dissatisfaction thereat.

In one of these orgies, now become almost daily in their occurrence, he met in a low tavern, in the Chinese campong, a Malay sailor, whose perseverance in following his every movement and gesture struck him as very singular. On approaching him, the Malay addressed a few words to him in a low tone, and, to the great surprise of all the companions of his ruffianly pleasures, Thsermaï quitted the house of the Chinese in company with the sailor, long before he had, as was usual, drunk himself into a state of intoxication.

From that moment his conduct was completely changed. The ex-suzerain of the province of Bantam was no longer heard to inveigh against the tyranny of the conquerors, and to assert the rightful claim of the natives ; he was no longer found to encourage the dissolute manners of the Dutch colonists, to scoff at their frivolity, their mean habits, their grasping mercantile spirit, and to express aloud the hope that the day of expiation would soon dawn.

In proportion as his discontent had been noisy, and his language had been reckless, so, thanks to that wonderful talent for dissimulation which he had drawn from his old Javanese blood, he knew how to restrain his feelings, to show himself prudent in his acts and reserved in his language. He did even better. He separated himself from the coarse companions of his impure orgies, he seemed to renounce his former irregular life, and, although he still retained his bedayas and the princely train suitable to his descent and the extent of his fortune, he appeared to have imposed a check upon his reckless expenditure, and to have entered upon a course of conduct marked by

judgment and sound sense. His conduct became so exemplary, that the governor and members of the colonial council, whom Thsermaï had commenced visiting, regretted the rigor with which they had been obliged to treat him, and hinted at the possibility of a future restoration.

True it was that, at the same time that Thsermaï had become one of the most frequent guests of the palace at Weltevreden, and of the residence at Buitenzorg, he had begun to form an intimacy with certain Chinese, whose hostility to the goverment was not the less known on account of its being covertly entertained. It was true, also, that he had made an intimate friend of the Chinese merchant, Ti-koï, whom we have seen at the supper at Meester Cornelis, and whose grandfather had been one of the ringleaders in the famous revolt of the Chinese, which, in the preceding century, had involved the Dutch rule in the isle of Java in the most imminent jeopardy.

We should add, that since Thsermaï's sudden conversion, vague rumours were afloat of nocturnal meetings, of malcontents in the woods of Tjidadal, in the province of Bantam, and in the immense forest of *Dayou Louhour*, situated in the south of the province of Cheziban, on the confines of the Réangers, not far from the classic part of the island of Java, that which was richest in souvenirs of the early sovereigns of the country.

About thirty miles from Buitenzorg, in the direction of the nearest summits of that volcanic range of mountains which traverses the island of Java, known by sailors as the Blue Mountains, three spurs of that chain, the Gagak, the Sari, and the Sadjira, formed a triangle completely surrounding a valley, a veritable oasis in the desert, owing to the coolness which the vicinity of those lofty peaks, rearing their crests about nine thousand feet above the level of the sea, maintained there during the excessive heats of the summer; this valley belonged to Tonan Thsermaï. It is there that we shall find him on the morrow of the evening which had had so serious a termination in the pavilion of Meester Cornelis.

Thsermaï's residence was situated in the southern part of that magnificent valley, upon the declivity of Mount Sari which was nearest to the plain. Built by the father of the young prince, it had not been placed, like the majority of the palaces of the great Malay noblemen, in the vicinity of villages or in the midst of land under cultivation, but was reached by a road winding through the forest which covered the slopes of the mountain nearest the plains. This forest contained specimens of every species of tropical vegetation—teak-trees, with their gnarled and knotted trunks, liquidambers of one hundred and fifty feet in height, thickets of colossal ferns, clumps of gigantic bamboos, underwood of laurels and gum-trees, forming a dense, impenetrable mass, increased by the wild creepers which fell in green and flowering cascades from the loftiest summits, and embracing equally the meanest shrub that grew there, forming a covert for the wild boars, stags, deer, peacocks, and grouse; whilst upon the most elevated branches wantoned the thousand varieties of parrots, intermingled with the shrill notes of the birds of paradise, with their purple and golden plumage, as they flew along the open glades.

Had it not been for the marvellous beauty of the gardens, which surrounded it like a boulevard, the palace of Thsermaï, seen from a certain distance, would have resembled a town rather than a princely residence.

Round the principal main building, built in the Moresque style, with domes as white as alabaster, minarets slender as needles and straight as the trunks of cocoanut-trees, the decorated façades brilliant with design and colour, the cloisters with their carved marble columns, the inner courtyards covered with light and elegant awnings, side by side with the fairy-like creations of the Arabian and Persian arts, a Chinese architect had grouped the wildest and most fantastic designs his imagination had enabled him to supply, and that, too, without the slightest order or connection, but bearing the impress of the most unfettered caprice; stucco pavilions, with open-work, lace-like tracings; little cottages of china;

bamboo huts perched in some places twenty feet above the ground, in others assuming the forms of animals; the various buildings, although apparently isolated from each other, were connected by vaults, by passages, and subterranean modes of communication as original in design and form as the buildings themselves.

Since his disgrace, Thsermaï had abandoned as a residence the Moresque palace and the state apartments, and lived with his harem and his slaves in the Chinese buildings. During the heat of the day he confined himself to a grotto of rock-work, carpeted with the most magnificent specimens of madrepores, of corals, and shells of the southern seas. A sheet of water, descending from the upper part of the grotto, excluded with an impenetrable curtain the heat of the day, as well as the prying eyes of the servants of the palace. It is in this grotto that we again find Thsermaï.

He was reclining upon pillows of green silk, worked with silver designs, which harmonized with the opal tints reflected from the pearl-like interior of the shells; he was inhaling, not the cool fumes of the Persian narghilé or the Indian boussa, not the delicious perfume of Oriental tobacco, but the bitter smoke of the cigar, precisely as a Dutch rice-merchant in his country-house at Batavia would have done.

By his side, in Turkish fashion, sat the man in the brown garb whom we observed at Meester Cornelis give Hurruck the narcotic, the fumes of which had so affected Eusebius Van den Beck's senses. This man was on the present occasion dressed like a Malay sailor, and bore a singular resemblance to the one who had spoken to Eusebius upon the jetty of the Tjiliwong the day after Doctor Basilius's death.

"Why should you go to-morrow, Noungal?" said Thsermaï.

"I must," replied the stranger.

"In what direction?"

"To the realization of our projects."

"But are you not afraid I should go wrong as soon as you have left me?"

"My spirit will remain by your side."

The Javanese bowed his head, and remained for some minutes absorbed in silent meditation. "Noungal," he said, after a while, "you have reminded me of secrets which I thought buried in the tomb; you have told me what Basilius, who for nearly a twelvemonth past has been food for worms, could alone know; you have given me proofs of a superhuman power, which have captivated my imagination; at the same time you have shown an interest in me which has won my heart: but before carrying out the very serious projects which may endanger my very existence, let me ask you one question, and promise me to answer it. Who are you?"

"Have I not already told you?" replied the Malay, with a mocking smile; "people call me Noungal; I am he who reigns over the Tjengaris, or Bohemians of the sea. However mean my external appearance, fleets of vessels, of which the most powerful sovereigns of the earth would envy me the possession, owe me obedience; and, better still than mere worthless collections of planks and ropes, those ruthless men who have no other home than the immense plains of the ocean, and who, accustomed from their childhood to disregard death, and know not even the meaning of danger, are as submissive to my will as slaves, and will rise at my merest sign to aid you. What more is needed to make Thsermaï the king of Java?"

"That is not what I want to know, Noungal," returned the Javanese; "I know the ferocity and the value of the Tjengaris, and the terror with which their name alone inspires the dwellers in the Indian Archipelago. I know that the European soldiers themselves would fly before them like a cloud of grasshoppers. You have promised me their assistance to recover, not the shreds of power which I derived from the munificence of our masters, and which their injustice robbed me of, but to

resume, in its widest significance, the rank which my ancestors held in this country. I have already thanked you; and I repeat once more that my gratitude will be as ample as the benefit conferred; but that is not what I mean.

"Speak."

"It is not merely the wild hordes of the sea whom Noungal has subjected to his influence; he rules the mysterious spirits which exist between the heaven and the earth, which Christians term demons, and which we term Devas and Djinns. Were it not so, how could Noungal have learnt what had passed many years ago between the old Dutch doctor and his pupil? who can have told him that which was as dead and passed away as he who heard it, if it were not the wandering spirit of Basilius? These are the mysteries which I wish to know, Noungal."

"Your question comes just in time, Thsermaï, for I had one to put to you myself."

"Ask it, and if it be in my power to satisfy you, I swear you shall have what you wish."

"There is among your bedayas one who has taken my fancy; I want you to give her to me."

"You will empty my palace, Noungal; to satisfy you, I have already sacrificed the fair daughter of Holland. Bitten by Hurruck's serpent, she only owes the prolongation of her existence to the antidotes which you had supplied her with against the bite of the reptile; but in spite of your remedies she will sink after all. Is it your wish that I should have no more dancing to amuse me in my leisure moments, or sweet songs to soothe my anxiety?"

"The words of Thsermaï are as light as the down in the fruit of the cotton-tree, which needs a mere breath and a second of time to scatter its snowy threads to the winds."

"No, Noungal, I have promised and I will not depart from my words; choose among the bedayas, whether she be as dark as the bark of the pomegranate or as fair as

the flower of the gardenia, you can take her, she shall follow you to your home : I only except one."

"That is too many, if it be the one I want."

"Point her out, then, Noungal, to save me wasting any more words."

"She whom I want is not dark as the bark of the pomegranate, nor white as the flower of the gardenia ; she is yellow as the lily which grows upon the bank of the river, and yet she is the fairest among the Bedayas."

"Arroa, the daughter of Argalenka ! " cried Thsermaï, whose swarthy face assumed a livid hue, and whose eyes became injected with blood.

"The very same, Thsermaï," replied Noungal, with the most perfect calmness; "but why do you change colour ? "

"Noungal, ask me whatever you like," cried the Javanese, in a ringing and abrupt tone ; "ask me for all the other Bedayas who people my palace,—ask me for my young panther which licks my sandals like a young dog,—ask me for lands and forests wherewith to make you rich,—ask me for my palace, and I will refuse you nothing ; but do not speak of Arroa,—no, no, I cannot give her to you."

"What do I need with your riches ? what could I do with your palaces ?—what I do want, Thsermaï, is the girl whose black eyes are like those of the gazelle."

"And I refuse you, Noungal."

"And would it please you to tell me why ? "

"I know not why,—it is impossible to define what is passing within me; but since she has resided in my palace, I have for her sake forgotten all her companions. The two last days which I have passed away from Arroa, have seemed like two centuries : I believe that in very truth I love her."

"If you were to be told that the throne you dream of cannot be acquired except you sacrifice her ? "

"Between a problematical future and the soft gaze which maddens me, and the caresses which make a very paradise of this earth, I should hesitate, Noungal."

"Child," replied the Malay with a smile, which partook

as much of compassion as of contempt, "you wish to rule the elements and the powers of another world, and yet you know not how to impose silence on your own passions."

The Javanese understood the lesson and bowed his head. Yet the bitterness of the reproach was not unmixed with a certain relief; it seemed as if he should not have to part with Arroa.

"Listen, Thsermaï," returned the Malay, "the moments are precious, and we have no time to lose. This evening I must quit the coast, to-morrow I must be on the ocean; in a month from this you will see me again."

"What shall I have to do until then?"

"You will go on with your work,—you will fan the fire of discord between the natives and their conquerors,—you will compassionate the sufferings of the oppressed,—you will assist them in the moments of their direst need,—you will aggravate every feeling of dissatisfaction, and hatred, and thirst for vengeance; in this country those are the only strings which we can pull; their faith in Heaven died with their belief in Brahma; and as for patriotism, they know not even the name. Sow gold broadcast, sow it without thought or fear; and when the harvest shall have ripened, you will see me appear again to assist you to gather it in."

"But the gold," said Thsermaï, with some anxiety, "you know how little the colonists have left me."

"To-morrow, Ti-koï will hand you six hundred thousand florins, which you will employ for the purposes I have mentioned."

"Six hundred thousand florins!—Ti-koï's hatred for the Europeans will never extend to the sacrifice of such a sum as that."

"The money I speak of will not come out of the purse of the Chinese."

"Where will it come from, then?"

"Two days ago you made me a present of a fair Bedaya I asked you for; and now I give her back to you, Thsermaï."

"Alas!" cried the Javanese, "the poor girl will probably die this very evening."

"No, she will not die until to-morrow when the sun shall have disappeared behind the summit of Mount Sari, and the next day, at the third hour in the morning, Ti-koï will bring her the sum I speak of. Enter boldly into the room where her corpse will be—you are not afraid of the dead, since you wish to converse with spirits of another world—and then you can take possession of this gold."

"But, once more, where does this money come from?"

"It is that girl's share of the inheritance of her former master, Doctor Basilius, whose will, you remember, gave a third of the fortune he left his niece to any one of the three women in his house who should succeed in obtaining a word of love from that niece's husband."

"What could have been his object in making so strange a disposal of his property?"

"Doctor Basilius never did anything without a motive; and, if his knowledge of the human heart was not unfounded, you will learn, one day, what his object was."

"But," said Thsermaï, returning to the six hundred thousand florins, which he could not forget, "can I take possession in so abrupt a way of that which belongs to a girl who is the subject of the king of Holland?"

"Thsermaï, in Holland and in the rest of Europe, as at Java, the poor pass through the world leaving as much trace behind them as a bird in flying through the air. The fair Bedaya was born in Friesland; her parents were so wretchedly poor that they sold her before she had attained womanhood. Doctor Basilius sent for her to come to Java. Doctor Basilius is dead, and who do you suppose would trouble themselves about the disappearance of a wretched creature like her? Take the money, and make use of it in the way I tell you. And now, give your orders for Arroa to get ready to accompany me"

"Arroa! You have not abandoned your idea of taking Arroa away from me?"

"One must learn how to check the throbbings of one's heart, not only for the purpose of ruling spiritual beings, but of governing men also, Thsermaï; serve your apprenticeship for a sovereign, and impose silence on your brain-sick passion."

"What do I care for the throne of Java? I transfer it to you, I give it you, Noungal, provided you leave me Arroa."

"Madman, take care!" cried the Malay, almost in a tone of menace.

"Noungal, your power is immense; I know it, since I know you; you have terrified me by the spectacle of your absolute control over all things, by the proofs you have given me of your superhuman knowledge; and yet, so that I keep this girl, I am ready to brave your power and your knowledge too."

"You will not do it with impunity, Thsermaï; reflect, and do not think of resisting my will." At these words, pronounced in a tone of high command, Thsermaï bounded from his couch; his face reflected the various passions which were raging within him. "Your will!" he cried, "wretched bandit chief! Is it in my own palace that you dare to speak of your will, and to place it before mine, and higher than mine, even?" The Malay never stirred; he remained perfectly impassible. "Yes," he said, "and it will not be the first time that you have had to congratulate yourself upon not having followed your own inclinations."

"What mean you?"

"Your father, the old Bapatis, enraged at your excesses, had requested the government of the colony to issue an order to imprison you in one of the fortresses of the island; he threatened to leave the sovereignty of his province to one of your cousins. Suddenly, the Bapatis of Bantam fell seriously ill. The man who had instructed you in various branches of European knowledge—Doctor Basilius I mean—attended him, and carried his devotion

so far as to pass night after night beside the bed of the dying man, to prevent him taking anything from other hands than his own."

"In the name of the Holy Prophet, Malay, say no more."

"Be calm; leave your knife quiet in its sheath, and listen to the end. In spite of the doctor's care and skill, the state of the Bapatis grew gradually worse; and yet, not sufficiently fast to satisfy the impatient desires of his son. One night, he forced his way into the room where his father, under the influence of a drug which the European physician had given him, was slumbering uneasily. Thsermaï held a creese in his hand, like that which you are fingering now, and he pretended to plunge it in the old man's breast. Doctor Basilius implored him to do nothing of the kind, assured him that the malady did not need his assistance, for that the next day the Bapatis would be no more. Upon the unnatural son's refusal to obey, and as, unable to reach the old man's couch, he had struck his former tutor, the latter ordered him to leave the room, in saying to him——"

"Enough, enough, Noungal," said Thsermaï, pallid with sheer terror, and trembling so that his teeth chattered,—"enough,—I know the rest: the lights were suddenly extinguished, a superhuman power, which could not have proceeded from the limbs of the aged and feeble Basilius, seized the son in its grasp, and hurled him from the room."

"Yes; but as the next day the doctor's prediction was verified, as the aged Bapatis died before the end of the day, as he was never examined to see whether there was poison in his stomach, and as no dagger was found in his heart, the son succeeded, without any dispute, to his father's wealth and rank. Do you now see, Thsermaï, that you have sometimes done wisely in not listening to your own inclination?"

Thsermaï was silent and overwhelmed; he sat down, and passed his hand across his brow, bathed with sweat, as if there had been a stain of blood to wipe away.

"Recover yourself," resumed Noungal, "and tell me, now, if I am to have Arroa."

"No," replied Thsermaï, in a fainter voice than before.

"Be it so; but in that case, justice shall give me what you refuse," said the Malay.

"Justice!" cried the Javanese.

"Certainly; since I shall prove that the girl belongs to me. That girl, as well as the fair Bedaya, was living in the house of Doctor Basilius, who had bought her from your estates through your steward. Angalenka told us something about that little story the other evening. Every time you came into the old town to see your former tutor, you cast a glance of envy and desire upon the young girl he had living with him. The doctor died; and though you hastened to carry her off, she and her companions had already disappeared. The next day, a man covered with rags came and told you he was the master of the girl with the eyes of velvet, and of her companion with the ivory skin. You offered him gold if he would make them over to you; the man refused, and was even more than generous, for he offered to place them among your dancing-girls, on condition that you would give them up to the bearer of the half of a ring which he then broke in two. That half is here; and now for the third time, will you give me the girl I want?"

"Yes, if you can take her," cried Thsermaï, with a bound like a panther, and levelling a murderous blow at Noungal, with the creese he had traitorously drawn from its sandal-wood sheath. As the Malay staggered back, Thsermaï thought he had slain him; but he recovered himself immediately, and opening the sarong which was thrown round him, he showed his breast covered with a coat of mail of the very finest steel links; the armour had not been injured by the creese, and merely a few drops of blood, produced by the terrible blow it had resisted, filtered through the meshes.

"I had supplied myself with it as a protection against my enemies," said the Malay, with a sardonic laugh; "but I had forgotten my friend." Thsermaï, over-

whelmed by the failure of his attack, remained in the profoundest stupor. He had drawn back a few paces, and stood on the defensive; but Noungal, shaking his head, said, with a strange smile, as he drew back his lips showing his teeth as white and sharp as those of a panther:—"Listen: if there were a single winding of your heart I had not penetrated, your recent attempt would show me the extent of gratitude to be expected from a soul like yours."

"Gratitude! what have I received from you for which I should be grateful?—promises, nothing more; where have you seen that gratitude is expected for mere promises?"

"I thought I was more advanced than that, Thsermaï; when I met you at Batavia, you were wallowing in the vilest debauchery, your hate and your projects of vengeance dissolved in clouds, as the smoke of the cigar which is smouldering at your feet. Well! It was I who gave a body and substance to all that; it was I who taught you how to gratify the one and carry out the other, in administering at the same time to your ambition; I stimulated you until I saw you resolved to change the common bamboo benches of the dog-holes you then frequented, for the throne of Java, the diamond of the Southern Seas; it was *I* who found for you the elements of insurrection which will one day make you king; *I* who have grouped around you the nucleus of an army of malcontents which can make your glory and your fortune; *I* who have shown you how to direct this subterranean work until the day arrives when the Dutch, feeling the ground mined under their feet, will attempt, but in vain, to fly, and will be crushed amidst the crumbling ruins. Is not all that something?"

"It is nothing, so long as success will not have justified the promises,—nothing but an idle dream."

"Be it so; but we will prove this dream a reality." Thsermaï made an impatient gesture. "Yes,' continued Noungal; "you are astonished that after your late murderous attempt against my life, I should still be

disposed tc serve you. Well! learn that as far as I am personally and individually concerned, I have for all men so profound a contempt, that, bad or good, friendly or hostile, I can equally disregard their feelings; it suits my own projects,—the bitter hate which, like you, perhaps I nourish in my heart—to work the downfall of those who govern and possess this island. You may rely, therefore, always on the support of Noungal; but at the same time I have my own work to do, towards which I move with the imperturbability derived from a consciousness of my own strength. Never try to fetter or control it, Thsermaï; for, notwithstanding my kindly feeling for you, I would break you like this glass." And saying this, Noungal pushed with his finger a crystal goblet containing a *sorbet;* it rolled from the table upon the floor, on which it broke into a thousand pieces. "Believe me, Thsermaï," continued Noungal; "I am not influenced by any idle caprice in asking you for this Bedaya. No, the time has long passed away since passion had the power to lead me captive. I am as indifferent to the lovely eyes which have so bewildered you, as to those vapours which, floating on the tops of the mountains, assume human forms and startle the affrighted traveller, who endeavours to recognize in their dusky outlines those beings which man in his pride makes the intermediary between himself and Heaven. No,—she whom I ask you for, she, whom I claim, she whom I require you to give up, is one of the wheels to carry on the work I have in hand; and let all the Bedayas and all the Rangouns in the island perish, rather than that work should miscarry. I repeat, therefore, here is the half of the ring; Arroa is mine, I insist upon it."

"Take her," replied Thsermaï, in a tone whose dejection and resignation contrasted strangely with the vehement language with which he had responded to Noungal's first request, and particularly with the attempt he had so recently made upon his life.

"Come, come, be a man," said the Malay, "and do not bestow upon this trial a tear which is of a far higher

value than the fancied treasure of which I deprive you," and as Thsermaï let the tear roll down his cheek without attempting to wipe it away, Noungal continued :—

"Well, although your grief seems unbecoming in a man, it touches me, I confess. It will not be until a month hence that I shall need Argalenka's daughter for the furtherance of my projects, you can keep her in your harem until then; in the mean time try to exhaust—at least to deaden—your weak passion for her; but as soon as the month I speak of shall have expired, hand her over without the slightest remark, without the faintest murmur, to the person who, on my behalf, will show you this half of the ring."

"Thank you, Noungal," replied Thsermaï, "you shall be obeyed."

"You swear it?"

"I swear."

"Good; but I have, moreover, a guarantee that you will keep your promise."

"What is that, Noungal?"

"I know your secrets, you know not mine; if you attempt to resist, as you have done to-day, the Colonial Council shall be informed of what took place at your father's bedside."

Thsermaï shook his head. "Believe me, Noungal, my word is worth more than all your idle threats. In what way you can have discovered the secret to which you allude, is a mystery between hell and yourself; but assuredly it will not serve you much, for you would not be able to support your revelation by proofs."

"Bah!" said the Malay with a jeering laugh, "Doctor Basilius was a wise and prudent man; and a long-headed fellow like him was not one to lose a treasure of such value as that. So, adieu, until a month hence." With these words, the Malay plunged through the sheet of water which served as a curtain at the entrance of the grotto. For a moment the cascade foamed round him, covering his garments with the spray, and then resumed its former appearance; through its rainbow-tinted hues Thsermaï

could see Noungal hurrying away along one of the garden walks.

The Javanese scarcely seemed to be aware of his disappearance, for he remained plunged in deep thought. "How could Doctor Basilius have left any proofs of a crime, the punishment of which would have overtaken him as well as myself," he said, after a prolonged pause, as if speaking to himself; "if he had left any proofs behind him, how could they have passed from the hands of Van den Beck, the doctor's heir, into those of Noungal? That Malay is capable of anything," he continued, after a further brief silence; "but it matters not, I must see Van den Beck again." Then with the hilt of his creese he struck a blow upon a gong, placed so as to be within his reach. At this signal the sheet of water ceased flowing as if by enchantment. A few pearl-like drops, borrowing from the sun's rays the softened hues of the opal, glided between the rock and trickled into the basin; one of Thsermaï's servants appeared at the entrance of the grotto. "Bring Arroa and my black panther," said Thsermaï.

A few minutes afterwards, a beautiful animal, with its skin like velvet, its eyes like topazes, agile and graceful in its movements as a kitten, but the more formidable perhaps on account of its gentle and winning ways, bounded forward towards its master; and Arroa, the yellow Bedaya, lovely and smiling, appeared at the entrance of the grotto, the liquid curtain falling behind her as soon as she had entered.

CHAPTER XVII.

The sun had risen several hours when on the morrow of the evening he had passed at Meester Cornelis, Eusebius Van den Beck returned to Weltevreden. Notwithstanding the notary's indignant reprobation of so undignified a means of locomotion, it was on foot that he had traversed the few miles' distance which separated him from the town. The servant who opened the door of his hotel started back affrighted at the deadly pallor of his master's face. He asked Eusebius if he were ill, but received no reply; and his master strode straight to his study, which he had scarcely entered than he seemed on the point of locking himself in.

"Do you not wish to see my mistress, sir?" said the servant, gently pushing the door.

"What business is that of yours?" said Eusebius furiously, "and who gave you a right to scrutinize my actions?"

"I merely asked, sir, because my mistress has inquired very frequently if you had returned."

"Very well, I will go to her room presently," replied Eusebius, who, for the first time in his life, hesitated embracing his wife.

The servant still remained at the door, and looked at his master, as if he hardly knew what he meant.

"What are you waiting for?" Eusebius asked, with a burst of passion.

"For the address of some doctor whom we ought to fetch for my mistress;—we don't know whom we ought to send for, while you, sir, who are the nephew of the late Doctor Basilius, would know immediately."

Eusebius, who had listened to the first part of his servant's remark with a puzzled and bewildered look, seemed suddenly to recover his senses, and, seizing the

man by the collar of his coat, he cried: "Never pronounce that cursed name in my presence again, if you do not wish to be sent away immediately;" and then, after a pause, in which he seemed almost choking, he added: "What do you mean by talking about a doctor—is your mistress unwell?"

Eusebius spoke with a sharpness of tone very unusual with him, especially when his wife was the subject of remark. If the name of Basilius reminded him of the sad events of the past and the apprehensions of the future, that of Esther reminded him no less of a duty he had to discharge. Was it that his conscience had anything to reproach him with, since the thought of this duty struck him with remorse? "It is thought, sir," the servant stammered out, "that to-day my mistress will be——"

At these words the various thoughts which had made Eusebius dread his wife's presence disappeared, and he flew up the staircase and ran to his wife's room, where he found her in bed. She smiled at him, notwithstanding her sufferings. "I thank thee, Heaven!" exclaimed Esther, as she threw her arms round her husband's neck; "for I should have been very unhappy if my child's first look had not been upon its father." Eusebius covered his wife with the fondest kisses;—he had forgotten all.

After a few minutes conversation about the event so full of importance for them both, Esther said: "How late you have come home; it is the first time, Eusebius, that you have passed a whole night away from me."

Eusebius's face, which was pale and haggard, flushed a deep crimson, and his eyes fell before the calm, clear gaze of his young wife. "It is that wicked M. Maës who led you away," she continued; "but I can hardly be angry with him, since I begged him to do so."

"You, Esther? do you say it was you who begged the notary to take me where he did?"

"Certainly; I hoped that the light-heartedness of that man would be infectious; that you would learn that amusement is the well-earned reward of a hard day's work; and that, a convert to his theory, you would lose

that look of thoughtful anxiety which your face always bears."

"Esther," cried Eusebius, "you have committed a great fault; Heaven grant you may never have to repent it."

"You terrify me, dearest.—What took place, then, last night? But the truth is, the happiness of seeing you again prevented me from noticing how pale you are, and the disorder of your clothes. Speak, speak, my own Eusebius; I love you so dearly that I am only jealous of your happiness."

Eusebius recoiled at the idea of a frank confession. The falsehood to which he saw he should be obliged to have recourse increased his ill humour against himself. He could not give vent to this ill humour without denouncing himself; it was, consequently, against Esther that its explosion was directed. "That is just like the women," he exclaimed angrily; "they see nothing but their own affection, and they seem to fancy that that is the only thing in the world which runs a risk of being compromised."

"Eusebius, you have never spoken to me in that way before," cried Esther.

"Why do you make use of such a silly and ridiculous expression, then?"

"On the contrary, dearest, I assured you that I was not jealous."

"Bah! a mere pretext for showing your jealousy."

"Really, Eusebius, I hardly know what you mean; if I had not such perfect faith in you, your strange and unaccustomed language would almost make me suspicious of something."

"Suspicious of what? Come, Esther, I insist upon your explaining what you mean," exclaimed Eusebius passionately. "Because I have been spending a night over certain matters of business, because that odious M. Maës has been the cause of my incurring a great loss, is that any reason why you should overwhelm me with your injurious surmises?"

"But what surmises, in heaven's name, have I had?"

exclaimed his poor wife, who, observing that her husband's agitation, instead of diminishing, increased more and more, was anxious to change the subject as soon as possible. "Dear Eusebius," she continued, attempting to smile between the tears which trickled slowly down her cheeks, "you know very well that I have the most entire confidence in you, that I believe in you as others believe in Heaven; if you tell me 'I have done so and so,' or 'I have been to such and such a place,' I believe you; and never—I swear it by our unborn child, which will soon form a new bond of union between us—never would the idea occur to me to doubt the truth of what you say. If I have offended you, Eusebius, forgive me," she added, holding up her fair and lovely face, crowned with the light tresses which escaped in wild profusion from beneath her cap. Eusebius remained gloomy and dissatisfied.

"I see," she added, "I must give you a new proof of my confidence in you; shall I tell you what is it?"

"Speak," said her husband, taking her hand.

"Well, then, in spite of M. Maës' earnest recommendations, I have prevented him telling you about the shameful codicil to our uncle's will."

"The codicil! the codicil does exist, then!" exclaimed Eusebius wildly, "and I have been trying to disbelieve it. If, then, it does exist, what took place last night is no dream after all, as I had hoped. The serpent-charmer,—that strange delusion which made me fancy I saw Esther dying,—the Rangoun,—those wild, bewildering dreams,—all—all are stern realities; and Basilius—Basilius has gained his first triumph over me! Yes, yes, I hear his laugh of exultation." And Eusebius pressed his hands to his ears, as if to shut out the sound of the laugh which haunted him. "Oh! heavens, he is going mad," cried Esther, as her pale and inanimate face fell backwards on her pillow.

The sight of the danger which his wife ran, restored Eusebius to his senses; he threw himself on his knees beside the bed, covered her icy hands with kisses

endeavoured to revive her, and rang to summon her servants, who hurried into the room in wild alarm.

The physician who had been sent for, soon arrived; in a few words Eusebius made him acquainted with what had taken place. The physician declared that Esther's situation was very serious; that the violent shock she had probably experienced would certainly produce a crisis, in which the mother or the child—possibly indeed both—might lose their lives. He insisted upon remaining with her himself, as he wished to spare her the excitement which would inevitably follow when she perceived her husband by her bedside.

Eusebius was in the greatest despair; but, deriving energy from the excess of his sorrow, he left the room. At the threshold he found the same servant who had waited up for him, and who told him that a gentleman, waiting in his study, required to see him most particularly.

Eusebius's first impulse was to reply that he did not wish to see any one; but reflecting that he should find, in attending to business, the best means of relieving the fearful anguish of expectation, he went down stairs.

The gentleman in question was our old acquaintance, the notary Maës. Presenting the strongest contrast to Eusebius's appearance, the notary's face bore not the slightest trace of the previous evening's orgie. He was as fresh and rosy, and as calm and smiling as ever; his necktie was of the most irreproachable purity; there was not, either in his suit of solemn black or in his face, the slightest indication of the bacchanalian and chorographical eccentricities of which he had rendered himself guilty at Meester Cornelis.

When he perceived Eusebius, he held out his hand, accompanying the gesture with an almost respectful bow, partly as a recognition of a boon companion and partly of a client.

"What have you come here for?" cried Eusebius, in an almost threatening voice;—"have there not been follies enough committed through your agency last night?"

"M. Van den Beck will allow me to observe," replied

M. Maës, in a gracious, yet dignified tone, "that I have the honour to be his notary, and that I have come here upon his affairs, not upon my own. But if my client asks me my opinion about what he is pleased to call the follies of last night, I must acknowledge that M. Van den Beck has committed a very great, nay more, a very serious one." As he made this remark, M. Maës struck one of his hands upon a stamped paper, folded into four, which he held in the other.

"Yes," replied Eusebius; "and I question whether I should be very wrong if I were to accuse you of being an accomplice in the snare which was laid for me,—you, whom I thought I was to regard as a friend."

"I was so, in real earnest, M. Van den Beck. If at the present moment I am nothing more than your notary, on the occasion to which you refer, I was united to you by the ties of real friendship."

"A fine friendship indeed, which consisted in taking me to such an infamous place, and in delivering me, bound hand and foot, to that infernal wretch, who is always on my track,—or if not he, at least his agents."

"I don't understand what you mean, M. Van den Beck."

"If you had not been the accomplice of those who, with the assistance of witchcraft of some kind, succeeded in subduing my senses, why should you have left me in their hands? why should you have quitted Meester Cornelis without me?"

"M. Van den Beck," replied M. Maës, almost in a tone of solemnity, "M. Maës the notary is in the habit of never inquiring into the actions and deeds of M. Maës the individual, and I strongly advise you to adopt a similar reserve: we shall find a considerable advantage in not mixing up serious matters with those which are not so. If, really and truly, you intend to bring against M. Maës the odious accusation which has just passed your lips, go to him direct, he will be prepared to answer you; it does not become the dignity of the notary to notice your remark; the truth, however, is, that he has no recollection of what you refer to."

"I believe it, for you were dead-drunk."

M. Maës made no reply to this apostrophe; but his eyelids closed slightly and for a moment merely, like a man luxuriating in the recollection of a past enjoyment, nothing more.

"You have only your notary before you, who has come to ask you, as his client, 'What am I to think of this document, which claims from you a sum of six hundred thousand florins, in accordance with the terms of the codicil to the will of Doctor Basilius, your uncle, and that on behalf of a young lady of the name of Jane Trumper, referred to in the said codicil?'"

Eusebius made no answer: he threw himself upon the sofa, and hid his face in his hands.

"This document has been delivered to me at my office —so the sheriff's officer told me who drew it up—in order to avoid public scandal, and to satisfy all legal exigencies, with a due regard for Madame Van den Beck's present delicate state of health. Here is the writ."

The notary held out the paper to Eusebius, who, with a sigh which seemed like a sob, took and crumpled it in his hand. "I beg your pardon," exclaimed M. Maës, "but you must not destroy that paper, as we may be obliged to submit it to Madame Van den Beck, who you will remember is the heiress, and not you."

Eusebius, who had been ghastly pale, now became as livid as a corpse. "Inform Esther of this, sir!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to kill her? Never think of such a thing, if you have the slightest regard for your own existence." Notwithstanding the terrible look with which Eusebius accompanied these words, the notary did not seem in the slightest degree to be disturbed by it; he quietly seated himself by his client, and took a pinch of snuff with the most perfect indifference.

"In that case," he resumed, removing with the tips of his fingers a few particles which disfigured the purity of his shirt-front, "you must furnish me with a power of attorney, duly executed, which you will undertake to procure from Madame Van den Beck, under whatever

pretext you please. We will then consider what is to be done with regard to putting in a plea of 'never indebted,' in order to oppose this young person's claim. We will try to find out some defect in form in the document with which I have been served, and we will have the case fully argued; and if the state does not choose to interfere with respect to that clause in the will of the late Doctor Basilius which constitutes the government his heir in case of dispute, why, we might perhaps be able so to arrange matters as not only to spare Madame Van den Beck's feelings, but to save her purse also, in which, however, this sum of six hundred thousand florins will not fail to make a considerable breach."

It is a singular circumstance that Eusebius, who, when in peaceful and undisputed enjoyment of the fortune of Doctor Basilius, had not attached the slightest value to it—who had frequently expressed his anxiety to rid himself of it—should, by a sudden but not altogether inexplicable change, feel almost overwhelmed with despair when he found this deprivation on the point of being realized, and when he discovered that he was about to be deprived of a considerable portion of that fortune.

It is the same with gold as with women: we can always tell, especially when they are about leaving us, whether and to what extent we love them. "Doctor Basilius could not be in his senses when he placed so high a price on the ruin of that wretched creature," observed Eusebius.

"A mere caprice of the testator, just as he enriched Madame Van den Beck to the exclusion very probably of his other relations."

"But," said Eusebius, who had risen from his seat, and was walking hurriedly up and down the room, "it is impossible I can be condemned to pay that sum. By the aid of witchcraft, of some kind or another, I was deprived of all control over myself; but my heart, my soul, my mind, remained pure and unsullied."

"I fancy, dear M. Van den Beck, that, like some persons of my acquaintance, you must have met with the

witchcraft you speak of at the bottom of a bottle. It is all your own fault, though; for you have never accustomed yourself to wine, and have treated it as an enemy instead of a friend."

"No, no; I will prove that I have been the victim of some infernal machination—that those who pursue me do not belong to this world—and that the utmost human strength and virtue are powerless against witchcraft."

"M. Van den Beck," returned the notary, "if you begin to talk of sorcery and witchcraft to our excellent Dutch judges, I very much fear that our case will be completely spoilt. What we need, is to find some good, substantial plea upon which to take our stand; and this is far more likely to be found among the pandemonium of chicanery than in the ritual of the occult sciences; since, however, you seem disposed to resist the claim of Miss Jane Trumper, I cannot conceal from you that the greatest scandal would result from the suit."

However complete the distinction was which the notary pretended to establish between the voluptuary M. Maës, and the stern public functionary, it is not altogether impossible that the idea of being compromised himself, supposing either of the contesting parties should happen to invoke his testimony, had not a certain influence in suggesting the observation which he had just presented to his unfortunate client. This observation threw Eusebius into despair; for the distress which he felt at the loss of 600,000 florins could not drive Esther out of his mind, and it was impossible for him to dwell, without horror or despair, upon what her sufferings would be, not at the loss of her fortune, but at the first infidelity of her husband. His distress was so evident that it disarmed M. Maës of the rigour with which he had come prepared to fulfil his duty.

"Come, my dear M. Van den Beck," he said, "you must not distress yourself too much; many who condemn you will regret not having been in your place. The fear I had of those abominable serpents made me fly. I was not a witness of the scene set out in this document; but

if, as I presume, the case refers to the fair-haired Rangoun, one can't help confessing that there is some excuse for a man getting into difficulty for so lovely a creature." And then, at an impatient gesture from his client, he continued: "But how the deuce, M. Van den Beck, could you, who seemed so confident of yourself, have been so weak,—and so weak, too, with one of the very three persons with whom you are, morally speaking, precluded from forming an acquaintance?"

And M. Maës entered into an inexhaustible list of commonplace remarks which retrospective reproaches so easily supply: he reproduced a whole string of inopportune reasonings, which a schoolmaster, for instance, might address to the disobedient child drowning before his eyes. True it is that his verbose eloquence had, at least, one advantage; it showed Eusebius the perfect good faith of the notary's conduct, how true it was that he was reprehensible only with regard to the levity of his manners and the facility with which he formed indiscreet attachments, matters which Van den Beck had known perfectly well before, and which he had been wrong in not suspecting sufficiently.

By way of peroration, the notary, who had taken his client's hand affectionately in his own, wound up by saying,—

"Come, come; a few words scribbled upon a piece of stamped paper will advance our little matter far more than all your sighs and lamentations, even were they powerful enough to carry a three-master from Batavia to Amsterdam. Tell me your whole story; don't conceal anything from me: a notary, with a priest and a physician, form together a trinity of confessors which every man needs in the course of his life."

Eusebius hesitated whether he should or should not repose implicit confidence in his companion; whether, indeed, he should not inform him accurately of every circumstance that had occurred since the day when Doctor Basilius had first entered his house. He fluctuated for a few moments in silent indecision.

On the one hand, like all others who are wretched and unhappy, he experienced that longing desire to communicate his anxieties and distresses to somebody else which seems to lighten them of half their burden ; on the other hand, it seemed that if he were to communicate to a stranger that which weighed so grievously upon his mind, he should be giving a life and substance to that which at certain moments he refused to regard otherwise than in the light of a dream of his imagination. He revolted at the idea that another person besides himself could testify to the existence of Basilius ; he hoped to destroy his recollection by denying its reality.

In the conflict which he had just undergone, after the shock which his nervous system had experienced, the firmness of his character had disappeared ; he no longer felt, as on the preceding evening, the courage to investigate particulars respecting the singular person to whom he owed his fortune ; he began to lose the stoical firmness with which he had hitherto been enabled to look danger in the face.

The ironical remark with which M. Maës had received his assertion of sorcery and witchcraft, made him fear that the latter would regard his strange story as the result of a distempered fancy or a diseased brain, and this last consideration, stronger than any other, checked him.

He, therefore, confined himself to the relation of the various incidents, so far as he could recollect them, of the previous evening, which he had passed at Meester Cornelis's : the heaviness which had suddenly attacked his brain ; the kind of fever which succeeded that first stage of the attack ; his suddenly waking up, and finding himself lying upon a mat stained with blood and covered with flowers and the remains of an orgy ; his surprise at finding the senseless body of the Rangoun lying by his side ; his confusion when, shaking off the torpor which possessed him, he learnt, from the jests of the bystanders, the terms of the doctor's codicil, to which M. Maës had alluded the preceding evening, and which he had promised fully to explain on the following day.

"It was a trap, to which my friend Thsermaï, who smiled when you so thoughtlessly praised your own propriety of conduct, was not altogether a stranger. It is said that that Rangoun was one of his *corps de ballet*."

"Thsermaï? But Thsermaï is rich."

The notary shrugged his shoulders. "No one is ever rich," he replied, "especially when he wishes to supply himself in this world with the paradise of Mahomet."

"But there was scarcely a kindness or expression of friendship with which he did not overwhelm me."

"A greater reason than ever; if I had a single doubt on the subject before, what you have just said would confirm it. Thsermaï had no motive in showing you such extreme civility; it was merely a speculation on the part of that disinterested native; he must have put some drug into your glass, and now he will go shares with the Rangoun; it is as clear as possible. You can see whether there has been any witchcraft in the affair, at least in the sense you attach to that word."

The conclusion at which the notary arrived somewhat comforted Eusebius.

Perplexed as Eusebius was by the alternative in which he found himself placed, either, on the one hand, of a scandalous lawsuit and of the distress it would cause Esther, or, on the other hand, of the loss of the third of his fortune, it was a consolation for him to feel assured that the influence of Doctor Basilius had nothing whatever to do with it, and that he was a victim of the grasping avariciousness of men and not of the malignity of that fiend. This thought calmed his terrors; it permitted him to hope that he might find no difficulty in keeping the other two thirds of his fortune, and that these two thirds were not menaced. Accordingly, it was with far more equanimity of mind that he examined, in conjunction with M. Maës, his chances of success in the event of his determining to contest the claim.

The notary's opinion was opposed to the commencement of any proceedings before the matter had been fully and frankly laid before Esther, without whose assistance

and concurrence, indeed, it would be difficult to carry on a suit to which she would be a necessary party. Here presented to Eusebius that he might confidently rely upon the indulgence and kindness of one who was so blindly devoted to him; that the fault, which he acknowledged, was not one in real truth, since his heart had not participated in it. Eusebius Van den Beck, however, was not to be shaken in his resolution; his pride revolted at the idea of acknowledging his weakness, and at the very moment he had such clear evidence of the frailty of man, that faith in himself, by which he had been already lost, remained as positive as before. M. Maës, who, as we have said, was not particularly desirous that the discussion upon this affair should become public, argued vehemently, with a Spartan-like devotion, against the resolution his client had adopted; regarding it, he said, as a duty belonging to his position.

All was useless; the necessity of this preliminary avowal determined Eusebius to make a sacrifice of the six hundred thousand florins, which was a severe trial to the avarice which was beginning to awaken in his heart. He accompanied M. Maës to his own residence, and signed, with great dejection, the necessary documents to enable the latter to procure him the sum required to carry out one of the provisions of Doctor Basilius's codicil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

By the time Eusebius reached his residence his distress of mind was excessive. The state in which he had left Esther occasioned him the profoundest anxiety. As on the previous evening, when gazing at the Rangoun, he had found it utterly impossible to concentrate his rebellious thoughts upon the woman he really loved; so now, amidst the tender and sorrowful thoughts which his mind

evoked, like so many gloomy phantoms, he found himself occupied in devising the necessary financial measures to repair the enormous breach which had just been made in his fortune; the anguish of his heart melted away in arithmetical calculations.

It was in vain that he repulsed this unworthy thought; it seemed to exhaust his strength in the efforts he made to drive it away, and took his place at the bedside, where his imagination pictured his wife at the last gasp. He was thinking with terror of the fearful power of human passions, when he arrived at his own door.

Like the majority of the mansions at Weltevreden, the house in which Eusebius lived was surrounded by a courtyard, ornamented with gravel walks, and planted with trees and flowers; there was a kiosque or summer-house in this courtyard, and, lying upon the floor of the kiosque, Eusebius, as he entered, perceived a man, stretched out at full length. The man's face was too characteristic to be forgotten after it had been once seen, and Eusebius recognized Hurruck the serpent-charmer.

He approached him, and moving him with his foot, not to awaken him, but to arouse him from the ecstasy in which he seemed habitually to live, he said: "What do you want?"

"Since when, let me ask, has he who summoned asked him who obeys, 'Why are you here?'?"

Eusebius remembered the rendezvous he had given the juggler, but as his mind had become stronger and less haunted with fear since he seemed to have acquired the conviction that the hand of his evil genius had had nothing to do with the scene at Meester Cornelis's, it became painful and disagreeable to speak of Basilius. "At this moment I cannot hear what you have to say," he said to Hurruck; "I will see you another day."

"The dust of the road has dried Hurruck's throat, the stones have cut his feet; are you going to thrust him out of your house upon the road when the night is about to wrap the earth in darkness, so that he cannot flee from

the tiger if he meets it, or call upon his God if danger threatens him? Let me pass the night under the portico of your roof, bid your servants give me some water to drink, and to-morrow I will rid you of my presence."

Everything that reminded him of Meester Cornelis had become odious to Eusebius; and although the juggler, whose parabolic counsels recurred to him very vividly, could hardly be suspected of having had any share in the plot, which he attributed to Thsermaï alone, still the man's presence was disagreeable to him; and yet, on the other hand, it was difficult to refuse so modest a request. "You are right," he said; "and not only will I give orders that you are well taken care of, but I will send you the present I promised you." Hurruck, without a word in reply, resumed his place upon the floor of the kiosque, as if completely spent by fatigue; Eusebius passed by him, and hurried up to Esther's room.

The greatest disorder prevailed there; cries and groans and sounds of pain and distress. Far from improving, the patient's condition had been gradually growing worse and worse. It was so alarming, indeed, that the physician had declared to the female servants who were in attendance that he could not answer for their mistress's life. Notwithstanding the powerful stimulants he had applied, Esther had not yet recovered her consciousness; her powerless muscles refused to aid nature in her efforts to bring her distressful functions to a termination.

Eusebius's despair was indescribable when he saw his beloved Esther in so deplorable a state. He had purchased his wife's life at the cost of the repose of his whole existence, and yet it seemed that he, after all, was to be the cause of her death. He could not help asking himself whether this was not the *dénouement* which had been predicted by Basilius, as to the eternity of his affection for his wife; he probed his conscience, he questioned his remembrance of the past; he taxed his memory with the utmost severity to discover whether, during the moment's error which had so fatally signalized that accursed night, he had not conceived the horrible regret which was to cost him the life

of her whom he had so miraculously saved. His heart was filled with the most passionate affection, with the blindest devotion; and yet he accused these feelings of deep and absorbed regard as being less enduring than they should have been. He burst into tears, and his tears were mingled with invectives against the supernatural being whose baneful influence made itself felt in every circumstance that befell him. This state of feeling lasted all the evening.

Night had arrived, Esther's pulse was growing gradually fainter and fainter, nothing seemed to indicate that her delivery was near at hand, or likely even; the physician, now thoroughly alarmed, told Eusebius he must be prepared for the worst, declaring that all hope of saving her was at an end; that it was his duty to confine his efforts to the preservation of the child's life,—to attempt the terrible operation which, if it killed the mother, would at least save the poor little being which otherwise she would bear with her to the grave.

Eusebius's grief repelled with horror this last extremity, and the doctor, unable to overcome his repugnance to the measure he had proposed, determined to leave the apartment.

When he saw him quit the room, Eusebius believed that all was over; he threw himself upon his wife's bosom, protesting that he would not survive her. At this moment the door opened, and Hurruck appeared upon the threshold. At the sight of this gloomy and singular-looking creature, with a coarse turban of grey cotton on his head and an enormous brown tattered sarong thrown round his body, Esther's maids screamed with terror.

Eusebius raised his head, but his despair was such that he could not find a word of surprise or protest at the Gueber's audacity. It seemed but natural that the whole world should participate in his deep distress; besides, great griefs are equalizers, and accept the tears of the poor as offerings as precious as diamonds. But it was with no notion of shedding tears that Hurruck had

arrived; he walked straight up to Esther's bed, and touched Eusebius lightly on the shoulder with his finger.

"What do you want?" asked the latter.

Hurruck's only reply was to point at his dying wife. Eusebius, in whose brain a thousand confused ideas were struggling in wild disorder, like the lava, sulphur, and bitumen in a volcano, misunderstood the meaning of this gesture, and almost fancied he saw the spectre of Basilius standing behind Hurruck. "Take her from me, never!" he exclaimed; "dead or alive this woman is mine."

"I am not come to take her from you, but to save her life."

"You!" replied Eusebius, with a look of the most contemptuous astonishment.

"Yes, I; the poor herb which the passers-by tread under foot possesses virtues far above the gold which is picked up because it glitters."

"So you, too," said Eusebius, with a gloomy laugh,—"you, too, will probably put a price upon the service you are going to render me; well, speak, say what it is you want; but be modest in your wishes, for if you need my life, it is no longer mine to offer you, as I have already given it to your friend Basilius."

"He whom you call Basilius was no friend of mine. I wish for no recompense for what I may do for your wife. It is a crime to set a price upon human life; does the sun by which we live bargain with us for the rays it sends?"

"No," returned Eusebius, in deep discouragement, "I have had enough sorcery and witchcraft hitherto; misfortune has entered this house through the instrumentality of the Spirit of Evil. Let both our souls quit it, and carry it away with them, with hers, and my own too, for I care not what befalls me. But I will never again seek the fatal acquaintance of evil spirits to work one of their infamous miracles in my behalf."

"Why have you not always been so wise and resigned?" said Hurruck; "you would not have been placed as you now are. But reassure yourself; I am not one

of those who have sought medicines and poisons from the spirits of darkness, of those who reject salt,—that symbol of wisdom and immortality; the knowledge I have is of this world, and whether I have good to do or evil to work, I need no other," added Hurruck, darting a look at Eusebius, in which hatred was so indifferently concealed that the latter felt his aversion for the serpent-charmer redouble.

"No," he said, "I do not require your services, go away."

"You have no right to tell me to go away."

"And why not?"

"If a man cuts the stem of the *montega*, which leaves behind it merely a light down which the first breath of wind carries away, it matters not,—Heaven has bestowed its rich colours to please his eye and to amuse him for a few brief moments; but to hew down the banana-tree at a time when it is bending beneath the weight of its yellow grapes which will soon be luscious and useful fruit, is a crime."

The truth of this picture struck Eusebius. Esther's maids now approached nearer. The terror which Hurruck had excited when he first entered, had disappeared, and they only saw in him one of those native doctors who enjoy a very extensive popularity at Java, even among the wealthiest colonists. Their sympathy was aroused in his favour; they entreated Eusebius to let him try and cure their mistress, and supported their request by instances in which the most extraordinary cures had been effected.

"Very well," said Eusebius; "but, as I will not allow him to use any other remedies than those which science or nature has furnished, the European doctor must be present."

To the great surprise of Esther's attendants, who knew the extreme aversion which the natives have to their secrets becoming known, Hurruck made no objection.

One of the maids ran in search of the Dutch doctor, who received the proposition with a shrug of the shoulders. However, in the patient's hopeless condition,

he thought there would be no objection to try an experiment, although, in his opinion, it was utterly futile. Hurruck, who, during this preliminary scene, had maintained a cold reserved attitude, gave a list of the medicinal plants, which were eagerly brought him.

He did not even require to prepare them himself, but gave instructions that an infusion should be made, which was forcibly introduced between the clenched teeth of the poor young creature ; and, when the Gueber had satisfied himself that she had received a sufficient dose, he left the room, calm and impassible, as a man convinced of the result, and resumed his place in the kiosque. To the immense delight of Eusebius, as well as to the doctor's utter stupefaction, the effect of the simples of which the draught was composed was as prompt as it was decisive. In a few minutes, Esther opened her eyes without the faintest trace of the terrible shock her system had experienced being visible in her face. Her gaze sought Eusebius, and her arms were held out towards him.

A few minutes afterwards, the first pangs of childbearing declared themselves ; and, in spite of the sinister predictions of the doctor, the confinement was easy ; and when Eusebius, who, worn out in mind and body, had not had the strength to be present at a scene fraught with anguish for loving hearts, returned to the room, he found the invalid slumbering peacefully upon her pillow, and a lovely little pink and white creature beside her, the living emblem of that mutual affection of which Heaven had thus permitted them to perpetuate the remembrance.

Must it be confessed ! Yet the truth is that, if Eusibius received with immense relief and delight the doctor's assurance that his wife was undoubtedly saved, he had only a cold and almost indifferent look for the child which had nearly cost him so dearly.

The child seemed as if it could never realize the promises of happiness which, during the last nine months, had been erected upon its future existence.

Conjugal love was inimical to paternal affection. At this moment the inconvenience was not very great ; but

was it not to be feared that, if Eusebius were some day to become a convert to the materialism preached up by Doctor Basilius; that if time and duty were to lessen his affection, as the rolling-mill does the piece of iron which is placed between its teeth of steel,—was it not to be feared, we ask, that it would then be almost too late to acknowledge the salutary influence of a feeling to which he had hitherto given no place in his heart, to find in it a buckler and a weapon of defence and resistance when evil passions might find him weak and defenceless? Whatever the fervour of his present tender affection for his wife, and however deeply her image was engraven upon his heart, that day was not perhaps so far distant as Eusebius imagined.

When Esther awoke from her slumber, and when he saw her as lovely as ever, and smiling in spite of her paleness,—when he felt certain that no serious result would ensue from the terrible scene at Meester Cornelis's, and that there was nothing to interfere with her perfect recovery, he found himself in precisely the same state as on the previous evening, when he had left the notary Maës, only that the reaction was in proportion to his recent excitement. And so, with Esther before him, with his young wife's hand in his, he thought no more of the dangers she had run, of the miracle which had again preserved her life; but his mind was occupied with the thought of the enormous loss to which he had been compelled to submit, and of the best means of repairing it.

He ordered his horses, took up his hat, and, without his good and gentle wife, whose every thought was wrapped up in him, venturing to make a single remark, he quitted her bedside, and proceeded hurriedly to his counting-house at Batavia, not even bestowing a thought upon Hurruck.

Besides, there was nothing likely to make him regret the determination he had taken; for his business affairs presented themselves for the first time in a favourable light, and for the first time he found himself in a posi-

tion to realize, with very considerable profit to himself, certain operations which the previous evening seemed likely to offer him only very negative results.

He returned home in the highest spirits. For the first time he had realized that intoxication of success which overmasters the strongest natures, and which disturbs the equilibrium of the least excitable minds.

He found Esther also in the highest spirits. When she saw him, she pretended to look as if she were offended, which rendered the smiling expression of her face more charming than ever. "I am going to make some very serious complaints against you, dearest," she said.

"They will be quite welcome, I assure you, for I need something to annoy me; your merciful recovery has made me so happy that I am almost afraid of my happiness," said Eusebius, who forgot to associate the successful sale of a large quantity of coffee with the unexpected recovery of his wife: "tell me what they are."

"If I must tell you what the long list contains, you must know, in the first place, that you were exceedingly naughty in leaving me alone on such a day as this."

"I am ready to make you the amplest apology," replied Eusebius, as he bent down and put his lips to Esther's forehead with a ringing kiss.

"In the next place," she continued, "why did you not think of bringing that poor man to see me, he who, with a few simple herbs—with what you and those like you call old women's remedies—not only has saved my life, which I only care for as far as you are concerned, but has given it to our dear little angel also?"

"True, true," said Eusebius; "I had completely forgotten that poor fellow Hurruck: where is he?"

"He has gone."

"Gone! before I have thanked him—before I have rewarded him for the service he has rendered us!"

"When they told me all that had taken place, and as you were away, I thought I ought not to lose a moment in expressing our acknowledgments, and so I sent for him."

"Here!" said Eusebius, colouring deeply, for he trembled at the idea of the serpent-charmer having spoken to Esther of the circumstances of their first meeting; "and what did he say?"

"Not much to my thanks—an absolute *no* when I spoke of the reward which, like you, I thought he had so thoroughly deserved, and which I begged him most earnestly to accept."

"It is very singular."

"But, far more singular still, he refused, with the exception of a little water, to take anything to eat or drink, which the servant offered him, or to leave the kiosque, in which he had established himself, to sleep under our roof."

"I will have him found, Esther, rely upon it, and we shall no doubt succeed in showing him how grateful we are."

"But I have not quite finished yet," returned his wife.

"What more is there?" asked Eusebius, who feared she would return to the conversation which had been the cause of the calamity of the previous evening, and that she would expect him to explain how he had passed the evening at Meester Cornelis.

"In the first place, when I make you a present of the loveliest little being that a father could dream of, a cherub as fair, as fresh, as pink, as chubby, as dimpled, as the angels which surround the image of the Virgin over the altar of the church where we were married, his hard-hearted and unnatural father begins at once by letting him die of hunger."

"How do you mean?"

"Alas!" replied his young wife, down whose cheeks the tears stole silently as she cast a sorrowful glance upon her spare bosom, which almost contradicted her rights of maternity, "you know that Heaven has twice refused me the happiness of becoming a mother, that I am debarred from nourishing my child with my own life and blood, and that I am obliged to yield that privilege to a stranger."

"Good heavens! — a nurse!— true, true," cried Eusebius. "Forgive me; but I was so disturbed—so beside myself this morning—that I have hardly known what I have been doing."

"You are forgiven," replied Esther; "and the more easily so, since your indifference on the subject has not prevented us from finding the most charming nurse in the world."

"Indeed!" said Eusebius; "and who undertook to find her?"

"Who but our preserver."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"And yet I explain myself clearly enough. Is not our preserver the poor man who in his simple knowledge showed himself more learned than the doctor?—It was the Indian who found her."

"Hurruck?—Hurruck brought you a nurse?" said Eusebius, stupefied; "still, you must know who the nurse is; ascertain where he obtained her from—whom she last lived with—learn all about her, in fact."

"Nonsense! Perhaps you think that the poor man who volunteered his services in my behalf wishes to poison our child? The doctor has examined her, and is so perfectly satisfied with the selection, that I can hardly think you are likely to disapprove of it. If you wish to see her, look."

With these words Madame Van den Beck drew aside one of the curtains which surrounded the bed, and disclosed a young female sitting down with the child in her arms, and almost buried amidst the folds of the damask hangings.

This young person was a negress; but her beauty was so remarkable, that it attracted immediate attention, notwithstanding the colour of her skin, which was as black and polished as ebony. Her face was a perfect oval; her nose aquiline, and slightly enlarged in the development of the nostrils, which were distended like those of a race-horse, and, like them, of a faint purple colour; her full lips, as red as the flower of the

pomegranate-tree, did not affect the regularity of her features, which seemed as if they had been borrowed from a Greek model. Her precocious maternity, while it added somewhat to the fulness of her hips, had in no way affected the suppleness and gracefulness of her figure. Her head was covered with a kind of network, made of small pieces of gold, silver, and beads of coral, among which her black tresses, slightly wavy, shone like polished jet. Her clothing consisted of a sarong of white cambric, covered with red flowers, sloped out very low in the neck, and revealing a pair of shoulders and a bust which resembled those of a bronze Hebe ; while peeping from beneath the hanging folds of her robe her little feet were seen, as slender and as small as those of a child ; while the large bands, inlaid with gold, which were fastened round her ankles, served only to display their shape.

Eusebius seemed quite unaffected by the appearance of this girl ; she reminded him of nothing, and aroused no nervous dread. The secret of his security was nothing more than the success which had attended a few wretched business operations in the morning.

Money success has this peculiarity about it, that whoever is fortunate enough to attain success, acquires immediately an absolute confidence in what he calls his star, in the infallibility of which, however strangely he may have been tried, he implicitly believes, until a fresh reverse overtakes him. He certainly thought it somewhat strange that Hurruck, the serpent-charmer, should have acquaintances of this kind ; but when he learned that the young negress had belonged to a wealthy lady of the colony, from whom the Gueber had purchased her in Esther's name, and that his wife was satisfied, that the doctor had approved of the selection, and that the price which had been paid was not high, he offered no objection. He did not observe that, when the slave had looked at him, she had some difficulty, as she bent forward, in smothering the fire of her burning gaze. He allowed her to become a member of his household without condescending to trouble himself any further on the subject.

CHAPTER XIX.

At the moment that Argalenka is about to reappear as an actor in the story, a few words upon the man's origin may be considered necessary. It is impossible to fix the precise date at which the Javanese, whom certain learned philologists have considered to be descended from a colony of Egyptians originally banished from their own country, received from the Indian soil the religions of Brahma and Buddha. Ancient native manuscripts establish merely that, towards the year 76 of our era, the worship of the inhabitants of the great Indian peninsula was the same as that of the inhabitants of the island of Java.

It was about the year 1400 that Moulana Ibrahim, a celebrated Arabian sheik, having learned that the inhabitants of so vast and populous a country were idolaters, determined upon their conversion. The slenderness of his resources did not allow him to make use of the means which the Prophet had extolled; he thought that, with the aid of Heaven, a pair of beautiful eyes might effect as much for his glory as the edge of the keenest sword. He was the father of a girl whose beauty was something marvellous; he embarked with her and a sufficient retinue of servants, landed at Disa-Leram, where he forthwith built a mosque, and in a brief period succeeded in making a great number of conversions among the people.

But the object of Moulana Ibrahim was not accomplished. He desired to win over to the worship of the true God one of the leading and most powerful men in the island, trusting that the whole population would follow its chief's example. He sent his son to the king of Madjapahit to announce his visit, and set out himself for the residence of the Javanese monarch.

The king of Madjapahit proceeded to meet the sheik, and received him with the greatest honours; but the latter

having offered the sovereign a pomegranate in a common basket, the king was offended at the meanness of the present, and conceived a great contempt for the man who had nothing to give his friend but a fruit which was of so common a growth at Java. Moulana Ibrahim perceived what was passing in the prince's mind, and having taken leave of him, returned to Disa-Leram.

He had scarcely departed when the king of Madjapahit was seized with a violent headache; mechanically he stretched out his hand for the pomegranate which was beside him; but instead of the sweet and refreshing fruit which he expected to find within it, he was astonished to find it filled with magnificent rubies. He sent immediately after Moulana Ibrahim to entreat him to return; but if humility be a Christian virtue, it is, on the other hand, a virtue but indifferently appreciated by the Mussulmans, and the new missionary, offended at the affront he had received, obstinately refused to turn back.

On his arrival at Disa-Leram, Moulana Ibrahim found his daughter seriously ill, and a few days afterwards, in spite of his utmost care, she died in his arms. The king of Madjapahit, on learning the misfortune which had befallen the poor father, hastened to visit him in his sore affliction.

It was three days since the young Arab girl had lain pale and lifeless upon her couch, three days since the angel of death had stretched its gloomy wings over that beautiful form, which had already begun to assume the darkened hues of speedy dissolution; but the rajah had heard such marvellous accounts of the young girl's beauty, that, after a few prefatory expressions of condolence, he intimated to the afflicted father a wish to see her remains.

His wishes were complied with; and when one of the young girl's female attendants raised the veil which covered the corpse, the king of Madjapahit was so dazzled at the lovely vision that burst upon him, that he remained for several minutes absorbed in silent surprise and admiration, and then, throwing himself upon his knees, he

prayed aloud unto Brahma that the soul of this young girl might be restored to its lovely dwelling-place.

"Cease calling on your gods,—they are of gold and ivory, and will not hear you; mine alone can lend a listening ear to what you say," said Moulana Ibrahim.

The king of Madjapahit, yielding to a celestial influence, addressed himself in fervent prayer to the God of the true believers and to Mahomet his prophet; and, to the great surprise of all present, the dark circle round the eyes of the corpse began to fade gently away, her lips to assume the deep blush of the rose, a faint colour to tinge her cheeks, her long curled lashes were slowly raised, revealing her large black eyes, which they had thought were closed for ever; she held out her hand to the king of Madjapahit, who became a Mussulman on the spot, and married her.

About the year 1421, Mahommedanism had spread in Java in so satisfactory a manner, at the expense of Brahminism and Buddhism, that the magnificent temples of worship belonging to those faiths were abandoned and left deserted. And yet there are still to be found at Java remains of its earliest worship, something more than the splendid ruins of the temples of Brambanam, of Borobodo, of Tchandi-Scivon, and of many others. Like all religions which have suffered persecution, that of Buddha has had its faithful disciples, hearts of gold and bronze, which have preserved through ages, and in spite of many tortures, the faith they had inherited from their forefathers. A whole tribe of followers of Buddha, or Beduins as the Mahommedans called them, inhabited the province of Bantam.

Chiefly agriculturists, they were poor, gentle, amiable, and laborious; and yet the hand of the regent, which was invariably withdrawn whenever a question arose of defending them against any vexatious exaction on the part of subaltern agents, pressed hardly upon them when a tax was to be raised, or the payment of any rate or due was to be enforced in kind. Sustained by the spirituality of their faith, they patiently submitted

to the misery of their sad existence, in the hope of a better life to come; and by this virtue they disarmed the bad feeling which sovereigns and suzerains had hereditarily manifested against them.

Thsermaï, whose education ought to have rendered him more tolerant, exhibited, on the contrary, a greater tyranny of conduct than his predecessors: they had only oppressed the Beduins; he, on the other hand, persecuted them.

Not satisfied with doubling the imposts they had to pay, he took a pleasure in ravaging their fields, by hunting his packs of dogs over them or passing across them with his horses and elephants. It seemed as if he regarded the mild and submissive disposition of these men as a reproach to himself, which he was most desirous of putting a stop to.

For a long period the Beduins submitted with exemplary patience to their fate. Like a colony of ants, whose frail edifice a child's malignity has overthrown, they redoubled their activity and labour in order to reconstruct it. Without a complaint or protestation, without an idea of vengeance, which is contrary to their dispositions, they rebuilt the huts which a mere caprice on their master's part had delivered up to the flames; they sowed afresh the fields which his sports had laid waste, working during the night, when their days were not sufficient for the task, and imploring Buddha to bestow upon their enemy good for the evil he had done them, with the spirit of Christians.

But this passive energy soon became insufficient to defend them; they fell, one after the other, like the fruit of an over-ripe bunch of grapes. Fever carried off one, fatigue killed another; while others, to avoid becoming a burden upon their poor brethren in faith, seeing themselves reduced to utter destitution, fled into the woods. At the end of a year of this system, the little colony had been reduced one half.

One of them, who had (a rare circumstance among the Beduins) passed half his life out of his native country, had brought back from Hindostan, where he had married, a

little girl, in whom, after his wife's death, he had centred all his affections,—whom he loved as passionately as the miser loves his hoards. At twelve years of age, this child promised to be as beautiful as her mother had been,—in other words, one of the most magnificent specimens of the yellow race of Affghanistan. One evening the young girl failed to return to her father's hut at the usual hour. Her father thought of the tigers, which in that part of the island are very numerous.

He did not allow his anxiety time to increase; he armed himself with one of the implements of his daily labour, and alone, bearing a lighted torch in his hand, and without reflecting whether, instead of the still quivering remains of the daughter he was seeking, he might not meet the wild beast itself, he searched the bushes of the forest. When day broke, he was still engaged exploring: he gazed around him to see whither he had wandered, and found himself in the immediate neighbourhood of the palace of Thsermaï. A sudden idea flashed across his brain.

He had calumniated the tigers: it was not in their palaces, in their jungles, he should find his child,—it was in the dwelling of his sovereign. He was proceeding in that direction when he met a Beduin leading his buffaloes to work. The Beduin informed him, that as he was returning home the previous evening, after his day's work, he had met Thsermaï's confidential attendant leading a young girl with him.

In the simplicity of his nature, he ventured to tell the despairing father that the young Indian seemed to be accompanying her guide very willingly, and was merry and smiling.

The father ventured upon a step which none of his co-religionists had ever dared to take before; he entered the palace of Thsermaï as he would have entered the den of the tiger, without fear or trembling. He addressed himself to the first servant of the rajah whom he found, and begged him, with the tears and entreaties of a father, to restore his child to him. The man

laughed in his face, and his companions, who thronged forward, did the same ; every prayerful entreaty was met by a sarcasm ; and then, as the noise might disturb their master's slumbers, they beat him until he was left senseless on the ground, and threw him out of the place.

When the old man recovered his senses, he no longer thought of returning to his humble home, bereft of his child, and deprived of all that had been the light and joy of his dwelling ;—he felt that it would be more horrible and more odious than the desert. He rose to his feet, bade adieu to the valley where he had been born, cast a last lingering look upon the palace, from which at that moment the sound of tambourines and musical instruments was heard to proceed, and bent his steps towards a hovel in which his brother had found an asylum, in the solitude of the forests.

Our readers will have already divined that this father, this old man, was the Argalenka we have seen soliciting, from a caprice of fortune, the means of tempting the cupidity of the Javanese prince, and of paying the ransom of his daughter. He was mistaken, however, in supposing that Arroa had entered straightway into the palace of Thsermaï : the confidant of that sovereign prince had carried her off for himself. It was only after she had passed nearly two years in the house of Doctor Basilius at Batavia, that she had been taken to the Javanese prince.

In the evening succeeding that on which Madame Van den Beck had become a mother, Argalenka was proceeding along the road which led from Tangerong to Zatinga. The shades of night had closed in,—one of those warm, perfumed nights which are only known in the tropics ; the sea-breeze cooled the atmosphere, and passed over the face of the island, impregnating with its soft fragrance the odorous trees of its forests, in driving before it the burning vapours which arose from the land calcined by the fervid heat of the day. Deep silence reigned in all directions ; the cry of the jackal in search of its prey upon the outskirts of the rice-plantations,

the sharp shrill cry of the jekko, alone disturbed the majestic repose of nature.

By the yellow light, which even in the absence of the moon, partially illumines those lovely nights, could be traced the confused outline of the trees in the valley, the grey mist of the coffee-plantations, and in the dim horizon the mighty forms of Panderango and Mount Salak, which rose in sombre majesty against the sky.

Insensible to the magnificence and loveliness of the panorama which unrolled itself before him as he advanced, Argalenka seemed to concentrate his whole attention upon the inaccessible summits of the remotest mountains, towards which he unceasingly turned his looks, as he bent his steps in the direction of their nearest slopes. Spent by fatigue, as was apparent from his bowed figure and from the painful effort he made to drag his limbs wearily along, he seemed inspired with fresh courage as he fixed his gaze upon the object he was desirous of attaining ; but the road was long, the task was arduous, and the excitement which supported him, served only in the long run more effectually to exhaust his strength. And yet he paused not, but walked still onwards, with his eyes fixed upon Mount Salak. Suddenly a stone, upon which he placed his foot, made him stumble and fall ; and when he endeavoured to rise, he felt so worn out by fatigue, that although, in his desire to finish his journey, he reproached himself for his dilatoriness, he resolved to rest himself for a little while.

Argalenka did not seem to resign himself very patiently to this interruption of his journey ; he frequently attempted to resume his course ; and at last, on recognizing the uselessness of his efforts, he exclaimed, in a tone of deep distress, as he raised his arms towards heaven, "Monarch of the universe ! Lord of heaven and of men, I call upon thee, Buddha, to stretch thy right hand over me and sustain me in the road I still have to traverse, to find those who are awaiting my arrival."

Argalenka had hardly uttered these words, when he heard the well-known hiss of the cobra-capello at a few

paces from him, and then perceived what seemed like a black line crossing the road. He uttered no gesture of alarm, nor even moved to escape the terrible reptile. But the latter was not in search of prey,—it was making its escape ; and the Beduin saw it disappear immediately afterwards in the underwood.

Nearly at the same moment, the maize which bordered that side of the road from which the cobra-capello had made its appearance, waved to and fro, and a man hurried out, pausing abruptly as he reached the open ground. This man was Hurruck. He perceived Argalenka, and stood motionless for a moment, as if to recognize who it was seated in the roadway. "What are you doing there ?" he said, after a pause.

"I am waiting," replied the Beduin, "until the appeal I have made to Buddha is heard, until he sends me either the strength I need, or a man who prefers to do a good action to gaining a treasure." Hurruck listened to Argalenka's reply without much attention ; he seemed occupied in trying to find out the trace which the reptile had left in the dust, and before answering the Beduin, he tracked it, with his head bent close to the ground, until he reached the place where the cobra had quitted the roadway ; and it was not until then that he approached Argalenka.

"But it is impossible," he said, "to reach the Blue Mountains to-night ; have you forgotten that, after passing through Jasinga, you will enter the wood of Lebak, in which there are so many wild beasts that Buddha and Mahomet themselves would not be able to escape alive ?"

"Were they filled with men thirsting after my life, and who would be far more to be dreaded than wild beasts, I should still go where I have to go."

"What motive can make you run such a danger ? Even I would hesitate, I who am a favourite of the Dadoung-awou, the good genii of hunters ; I who make it my business to seek them out in their most secret and gloomy lairs." Argalenka made no answer. Hurruck

did not seem to be offended at the reserve which the Beduin wished to maintain. "That is your secret," he contented himself by saying.

"No," replied Argalenka, "the suppliant has no secret, his heart belongs to him at whose hands he asks his very life. Besides, why should I conceal my designs? My heart is as pure as the water which Heaven has placed in the ravenala, the tree of the thirsty traveller."

"Good," said Hurruck, interrupting Argalenka, "your confidence shall not be mistaken; I swear to do for you what a poor man can for a man poorer even than you are,—to aid you with all the strength and courage I possess. But spare yourself the trouble of telling me your history: I know who you are," continued Hurruck, who had been looking at the Beduin with the greatest attention for the last few minutes.

"You know me?" said the former.

"Yes; your name is Argalenka; you fled from your cottage because one of Thsermaï's people had carried off your daughter; you went two days ago to Meester Cornelis, you stripped the Chinese of all they were worth, and you offered the gold you had won to your prince, in order that he might restore your child to you; he refused, and you went away; you returned to Weltevreden, and the next day you were walking up and down the Place du Roi, waiting until the palace should be opened. Is that true or not?"

"It is all quite true," replied Argalenka.

"Good; now listen to the end. On the thirteenth day of the month of Katigo, certain men, Javanese, Beduins, Chinese, Malays, and Moors, met in the forest of Tjidadal; they there talked about the massacre of the masters of the island. The Beduin, Argalenka, hidden in the worm-eaten trunk of a liquidamber, which for more than a year past had served him as a retreat, had heard all that passed; and if Argalenka waited the other day before the Government House until the palace of the white sultan was open, it was because he intended to relate what these men had said."

"True," returned Argalenka, "my religion commands me to prevent as much as possible the spilling of the blood of creatures, who have all issued alike from the hands of Buddha."

"Yes," retorted Hurruck; "but if you were so desirous of carrying out the precepts of your law, it is also because you had recognized Thsermaï in the forest of Tjidadal; and yet there is another injunction of Buddha which says, 'You shall do no evil to those who have wrought evil unto you.'" Argalenka hung down his head in silence.

"It seems that a minute was quite sufficient to make you forget the second commandment of your god, as you had forgotten the first. While you were looking at the soldier in a blue and yellow uniform, walking up and down in front of the palace, a man, a Malay dressed as a sailor, was watching you narrowly. This man approached you and said, 'Argalenka, do you wish to see your daughter?' You started then, as you start at this moment, and you replied, 'I would give my life for a kiss from my child once more.' You now thought as little of executing the commands of Buddha to prevent the blood of your fellow-creatures from being shed, as I should think of checking the course of the river Tjiliwong."

Argalenka did not wait for the completion of the Gueber's last phrase; he had listened to it with breathless anxiety and anguish.

"Yes," he replied; "he has permitted me to see my child once more,—you heard him, did you not, and you can bear witness to it? How can you expect me to think of anything but my sweet Arroa, of the caresses which her old father will so soon again enjoy! for, now you know that it is she whom I am going to meet on Mount Sadjira, that she will be there, that she is now waiting for me perhaps;—and, heavens! if I cannot reach there, she might fancy I have ceased to love her. You will not refuse to lead me there;—a father who wishes to see his child once more is sacred. Come, help me to

rise,—help me to overcome these rebellious limbs ; give me your support, and if my body were still to fail me, leave me on the road; but open my breast, take out my heart, and bear it to her who fills its every fibre."

"Argalenka," said the serpent-charmer gravely, "Arroa is not awaiting you by the Mount Sadjira."

"You are mistaken, man; it is impossible. The Malay said to me, 'Go, and wait for your daughter upon Mount Sadjira, in the stable at Gaugung Badak, at the spot where the mountain-ridges begin ; before the sun shall have tinged the blue summits five times with its purple hues, Arroa will be in your arms. Your distress, poor old man, has touched me, and I will beg Thsermaï to do what I wish.' It was thus that he spoke to me ; he could have had no motive in deceiving me, and when Arroa knows that she would be allowed to press her old father in her arms once again, she will be sure not to fail. Perhaps you think my daughter does not love me. Great Heaven !" exclaimed the old man, with a sudden burst of excitement, "you cannot think it ! If you had seen us in our cottage in the evening when she asked for my blessing, there were kisses and caresses without end, and in the morning they were renewed ! She was so pretty, too, was my Arroa, so beautiful, that she was more like the daughter of a spirit of the air than of a poor Beduin. No, no ; tell me not that, man ; tell me rather that she has passed the night in listening to the beatings of her heart, in hearing them pronounce my name, even as the throbbings of my own have murmured hers since I left Weltevreden ; say *that ;* tell me that she will be sure to come, that she still loves me. Why should you object to say so, since you know it to be the truth,—since you cannot but believe it to be true ? And if you do *not* believe it, say so still, out of pity to the poor Beduin, who implores you on his knees. To prove the contrary would kill me, even as I should die also, if, after so many hopes, I saw the happiness which for the last sixteen hours has almost driven me wild, snatched away from me at last."

Argalenka's frantic appeal pierced the rough covering which surrounded the Gueber's heart. He took the old man's hand in his own with more feeling than was usual with him. "I do not say she does not love him who gave her life, nor would I assert that she still loves him; of one thing I am certain, and am ready to affirm it on the faith of my oath, that you will not find her at the rendezvous which the Malay has mentioned."

"Who shall I find there, then?"

"Two creeses, who will bury in your heart the secret of the meeting in the wood of Tjidadal."

"My daughter, my daughter!" cried the poor father, with a heart-broken expression of despair, and as if, in the death which Hurruck showed him hanging over his head, the idea of a new separation from his daughter had alone struck him.

"Your daughter is with the rajah. Basilius carried her away from you, and after his death Thsermaï claimed her." Argalenka hid his face in his hands. "But," continued the Gueber, whose voice at this moment no longer betrayed any emotion, "does the wrong which others have done you, excite no other feeling in your breast than that of a useless grief?"

"How do you mean?"

"Would not vengeance be a soothing remedy for your wounded heart, as the djarak is against the bite of a serpent?"

"Alas!" returned the old man, "all that I know is that I love my daughter; and my heart is so filled with that thought it has no room for any other."

"Father, your hair is white with years; if, therefore, you have lived among men, you ought to know them well. Does not your look extend beyond the pupil of your eye? I have passed my life in the forests, amidst the wild beasts which frequent them, and this is what I have seen: When the kidang is still a fawn, although he is gentler than the gentlest woman that ever breathed, he menaces his sire if his sire attempts to interfere with his love.' From what *he* does, you may judge what the young tiger

will do. You are poor, and your daughter lives in splendour; you find your rest upon the highway, while she is living in a palace; like me, you have left half your sarong among the thickets of the forest; the garments that Arroa wears glisten like the waves in the rays of the sun. What can there be in common between you and her?"

"Speak not so; you are blaspheming Heaven in speaking thus of the love of children for those who have given them life."

"But I will and must speak so. You have been trampled under foot, and I wish you to rise again; you have been struck, and I wish you to lift up your head. If your daughter's love is yours no longer, think of those who have robbed you of it, and in your hatred, as in your affection, you will find the richest enjoyment."

"Buddha has placed us in this world to love, and not to hate each other."

"Buddha is only an expression," pursued the Gueber. "Show me your god, as I can show you mine. The true god is the sun, which has given us fire. Look at yon volcano," continued Hurruck, pointing to the summits of the Panderango, which, in the darkness of the night, reared aloft their reddened crests—"look at that volcano, which burns only to destroy and desolate. And yet it is the deity who has lighted its fires in the bowels of the mountain; so it is his will that there be passions which he has placed in our souls."

"But do I not tell you, man, that I have searched, but cannot find a feeling of hate and vengeance in the soul I have received from Buddha!"

Hurruck struck his foot impatiently on the ground. "Argalenka, the Malay who promised to restore your daughter to your arms, has lied."

"If he has done so, I pity him; and I will pray Buddha to teach him the true value of sincerity."

"Argalenka, I have told you already that Arroa passed from the European doctor's house to the harem of the rajah; her purity has been twice sullied."

"Her father's love will purify her, Hurruck."

"Argalenka, not satisfied with polluting her body, the man I speak of has ravished your child's heart; and your daughter's mind has become the prey of the fiend."

"There is no limit to the power of Buddha; his breath sweeps away evil spirits, as the wind drives the leaves of the valley before it."

"Go, then, since you must go, old madman; go to the Sadjira; your eyes will only see the walls of the old abandoned stable, and the thickets of the papaw and the mangoustan trees; your ears will only hear the cries of the dwellers in the wilderness, who will gloat over the easy prey in their lairs. You will then regret, when it is too late, having refused to listen to him who loyally offered you his hand, and who alone is able, if not to restore to you the caresses of your child, at least to satisfy the father's gaze with the sight of her."

"You! you!" cried Argalenka, forgetting his weakness, and starting to his feet as if his limbs were steel springs. "I thank thee, Buddha; I thank thee for having listened to my prayer, for having sent this man to my assistance; I shall see her once more. Ah! my happiness will kill me; the tears which flowed so readily just now stop at my eyelids, and burn like fire. And it is to you that I shall owe this happiness: I saw from the very first that your heart was good and kind."

The darkness prevented Argalenka from observing the sinister smile which at this phrase flitted across Hurruck's lips.

"Yes," resumed the latter, "if she has not come to you, we will try and go to her."

"When shall we start, then?" asked the old man; "it seems we have already lost much time. Oh! it is because I feel as I did when I met you, and thought the bird of the morning was tardy in uttering the cry with which it salutes the rising sun. Arroa, my child, I shall see you again!"

"Yes; but I make one condition."

"What is it? Speak! Is it my blood, my life, you require? Must I walk through fire to meet her? You

have but to say, and I will do your bidding, whatever it may be. You who have sympathized with my bitter sorrow can judge what the feelings of a father are."

"Listen: like you I am a victim, but not a patient and resigned victim like yourself; and when once Hurruck has been offended, even as the famished tiger listens only to the cravings of his hunger, so does he listen only to the hate which consumes him. He walks steadily onwards towards his prey, crawling if it be necessary to crawl, hiding himself in the thickets so long as the hour of expectation has not struck, but always ready to bound on and rend in pieces with his pitiless claws those who have been imprudent enough to excite his anger."

"And what do you want with me?"

"However strong and courageous a man may be, he is but man after all; he can die, and his vengeance perishes with him. Therefore swear to me, by the temple of Boro-bodo, to aid me in my work, to second me to the utmost of your power, if you find what I have told you to be really true, that your daughter will see in you only a stranger, a wretched beggar."

"It is impossible! my Arroa not recognize her father!" said the old man, with a smile of a fixed assurance of faith.

"Why do you hesitate, then, to take an oath which binds you to nothing?"

"Buddha would not accept the oath. I do not condemn you, Hurruck, but your ways are not my ways. You are right to compare yourself to the tiger of these mighty woods, if, like it, it is only in blood you can slake your thirst: but I have faith in the justice of that being who sent me into this world; and I believe, that as I have done my utmost to follow his laws, he will undertake my cause; that he will punish, if punishment be necessary; that he will avenge me, if vengeance is due, and I leave the matter in his hands. But because I refuse to do what my god forbids me doing, is that a reason why I am to be deprived of the happiness you promised me—why you

should have put the cup of happiness to my lips, as if only to make me feel the anguish of thirst."

"No," answered Hurruck brutally; "I have told you my conditions, you have refused to subscribe to them; I abandon you; pray to Buddha to restore your daughter to your arms, but expect nothing more from Hurruck."

"I shall do so," replied the old man, with a sorrowful resignation; "I am wretched, alone, abandoned by all; I have no longer the strength to raise my feeble hands; but my cause is with the god of my faith, and it is he who will punish the guilty."

"I put faith in none but in myself," returned Hurruck, gathering the folds of his sarong around him to proceed on his way; "my own arm will strike those who have struck me. Farewell." With these words Hurruck walked hurriedly away, leaving Argaleuka where he had found him, kneeling in the dust of the road.

CHAPTER XX.

SINCE the departure of the Malay, Thserman had never ceased thinking of the threat he had left as his parting salutation. Far from resignign himself to the separation from Arroa which Noungal had made him regard as inevitable, he found himself every day becoming more entranced than ever by her loveliness and winning ways. It was in vain that he had tried to weary himself with the caresses of one whom he had only a limited time left to love, the yearnings of his heart remained ungratified, and his desires unappeased. She had become his very life; and he tried to discover a means of releasing himself from the troublesome guardianship of the man who had awakened those ambitious dreams which he was not inclined to renounce at the sacrifice of the lovely Hindoo.

Every moment unoccupied by his pleasure he devoted

to reflecting upon the means he ought to employ to arrive at this result; still Noungal did not seem to be a man to be defied with impunity. He thought with dismay of the singular power which this supernatural being exercised, and of the fearful secrets of which he was possessor; and superstitious, like all the Javanese, notwithstanding the education he had received, he repelled in sheer terror the tumultuous thoughts which pressed upon his brain, trembling lest the eye of the Malay might read into his heart as easily as he had read the mysteries of the past.

One day, when more thoughtful than usual, when his brow was overcast, his look full of anxiety, and his lips pressed convulsively together,—when neither the dances nor the smiles of the occupants of his harem had been able to distract his thoughts,—he descended into the gardens which surrounded his palace, and walked meditatively beneath the thick foliage of the trees. He was accompanied by the black panther, which has already been introduced,—a magnificent animal, with its silky and shining skin, and eyes yellow and brilliant as topazes. It followed him step by step like a young dog, every now and then rubbing its head against its master's legs, quietly unrolling the long rings of its tail, and watching for a caress with an almost feminine gracefulness and coquetry.

As Thsermaï was walking along a path skirting the bamboo palisade which separated the park from the forest and served as a rampart against wild beasts, he perceived at the extremity of the walk a man climbing over the frail barrier. The gloomy thoughts to which the Javanese was a prey at this very moment did not make him feel over indulgent; he turned towards his panther, pointed to the man, and excited it with his voice. The animal raised its head, breathed heavily through its nostrils, crouched down for a moment upon its hind-quarters, and then, as swift as lightning, as light as the wind which plays over the crests of the waves, it darted forward; but, to Thsermaï's utter astonishment, it was not, as he expected, to tear the intruder to pieces with

its claws and teeth; he saw it lavish caresses upon him which it was accustomed to bestow only upon his master, raise itself on its hind legs, lean its head against the stranger's face, gambol round him, and at last lie crouching at his feet.

The Javanese, furious with passion, drew his creese, and ran forward to the group formed by the man and the animal, undecided in his jealous fury which to kill of the two, or whether to kill them both. It was only when within twenty paces from them that he recognized Hurruck. The Gueber was quietly caressing the panther,—playing with it like a cat, confiding his hand to its powerful paws without the slightest apprehension of its claws. He smiled with a friendly recognition when he saw the Javanese approach. But this smile did not seem to disarm Thsermaï's wrath. "Are there no doors in my palace?" he cried. "Why do you enter like a thief, at the risk of being torn in pieces by my panther?"

"Maha has forgotten that it was I who took her away from her mother, and deprived her of her liberty, but she still remembers that it was my hand which fed her first; she would sooner throw herself upon you, Tonan, than offer to bite Hurruck."

The beast seemed to approve what the Gueber said; she accompanied his remark with a formidable growl, and looked at her old master with eyes expressive of the greatest affection. Nothing more was needed to make Thsermaï's anger overflow. "You do not answer my question, dog! Do so at once, unless you wish my creese to find your words at the bottom of your throat."

"Hurruck was afraid that, if he presented himself in the courts of your palace, your servants would be ashamed of his tattered clothes, and would refuse to introduce him to the lord and master of this place."

"Say, rather, that you came to watch what was passing in my dwelling, heaven-accursed Gueber that you are."

Thsermaï's harsh language did not seem to make the slightest impression upon Hurruck as he stood before

him with a countenance humble rather than impassible; and when the Javanese had finished his phrase, he turned towards him, his hands folded in sign of supplication, as if imploring pardon.

"Well, what do you want? Speak. Have you come to claim what Noungal promised you at Meester Cornelis's,—the beautiful European Rangoun?" Hurruck still made no reply; he remained perfectly impassible, except that his large lids closed over his eyes, as if he wished to hide them from Thsermaï's observation. "If that be so," continued the Javanese, "I am ready to satisfy you; for, after all, it is but your due;" and, pointing to a small mound of earth under a laurel thicket, where the ground seemed to have been recently disturbed, he said, "She whom you seek is there; dig deeply with your creese and you will find her."

"She is dead, then?" said the Gueber, with the utmost indifference.

"By Mahomet! the opium you took the other day must affect your brain still, Hurruck; for how could you suppose that a wretched object like yourself would be likely to get anything but the corpse of a white girl?"

"The black drug transports us to the paradise of the gods, and the beauties which people it look not at the colour of him who, in the heaven of his dreams, tells them that he loves them; but the Bedayas of the opium fumes do not follow us when we descend to earth again, and I have still the perfume of their kisses on my lips, although I have already forgotten their heavenly faces. It is not for the fair girl that I have come here, my lord; I have come because I have been sent to you."

"By whom?"

"The Adipati of the men of the long tails, Ti-Koï, the Chinese."

"Ah!" returned Thsermaï, becoming suddenly pacified; "and what do you bring me from Ti-Koï?"

"The news that your fears were unjustly founded; that all the formalities which our masters of the island require have been satisfied; that you can make free use of the

gold which belongs to the fair girl yonder; that the wishes of the master have prospered."

"Good," said Thsermaï; "and as a reward, Hurruck, I promise you a night completely peopled with the dreams you love so much; but," he continued, turning pale in spite of himself, "have you seen Noungal, he whom the Chinese calls the master."

"Yes," replied Hurruck.

"And what did he say to you?" asked Thsermaï, whose emotion was betrayed by his voice.

"Let us talk of the brothers of Maha, your panther, who roar in the forest night and day; let us talk of the tigers which make the rocks resound with their cries; let us speak of the Panderango, whose thunders shake the whole island when the mountain vomits forth its flames; but do not let us speak of Noungal yet."

"Gueber, why do you say *yet?*"

"Because I am still uncertain whether Noungal is a man, or one of those Barkasahans who live in tombs and never quit them except to work the misery of the sons of the earth,"

"And you are trying to clear up your doubts?"

"Yes," replied Hurruck.

Thsermaï remained silent for several minutes in deep thought, and then turned towards the serpent-charmer, saying, "Hurruck, in spite of your occupation as a juggler, I have always looked upon you as a man of great intelligence and courage; come with me; I will clothe you in rich garments, and your home shall be in my palace."

"Hurruck has always lived free among the mountains; he would be a bad servant, I can assure you, Thsermaï."

The Javanese smiled. "I did not mean that you should serve me as a servant, Hurruck; you shall preserve your independence; so, come to my palace, where you shall enjoy the wealth I possess."

Just as Hurruck was about to follow the Javanese, he turned towards the spot where the young Dutch girl was lying; it might have been to say farewell to one whose fascinations had conquered the roughness of his nature.

A horrible spectacle met his gaze. While conversing with Thsermaï, the panther, attracted by the effluvia of the corpse which escaped from the grave, had glided among the shrubs, and, scratching away the earth with her powerful claws, had succeeded in exposing the body of the poor Rangoun, whose shroud it had already in playfulness begun to tear in pieces. "Here, Maha, here!" cried Thsermaï, who a few moments before would probably have remained insensible to this hideous profanation. And as the animal remained deaf to his voice, he advanced and kicked her away from the grave.

It was then that, through the torn shroud, Hurruck perceived the livid-coloured flesh of the charming being to whom he had dreamed of devoting his love. A convulsive shudder passed through his frame, and despite his control over his feelings he could not restrain the tears which for a moment, and but for a moment, flowed silently down his cheeks. Thsermaï was too busily occupied in reducing Maha to her wonted obedience, to observe the emotion of the Gueber; still he did not think it conducive to his own interests to leave the poor devil any longer in the presence of such a spectacle, and he dragged him hurriedly away. The few words Hurruck had uttered respecting Noungal had fixed the irresolution of the Javanese. In spite of the repeated assurances he had given to the contrary, gratitude was the least burdensome quality in Thsermaï's heart; and since Noungal had claimed the possession of Arroa, his only thought was how he could free himself from this inconvenient friend. The difficulty of doing so was the only circumstance which embarrassed him.

If Noungal had been an ordinary man, Hurruck himself would for a few piastres have put him out of the way; and if Hurruck had objected, there would have been no lack of arms less scrupulous and more obedient. But the Javanese felt convinced that Noungal was human only so far as his face was concerned; and he feared that the creeses of his hired assassins would be of no effect against him, and that this new attempt would

be as useless as the dagger-thrust which he had himself aimed at him.

To triumph over Noungal, it was necessary to look for champions and weapons in the world to which he belonged; and, for the present, Thsermaï found nothing better to his hand than Hurruck, who, having always mixed a little empiricism in his occupation of a juggler, was considered by the people generally to be addicted to the black art. We smile readily enough when the subject of the fantastic world of spirits is started, but at Java this is far from being the case. Java is the Armorica of the eastern seas. Like the Breton, the Javanese attaches a superstitious tradition to everything which passes around him,—to everything he observes: there is not a village, not a highway, not a lonely cross-road, not a a tree, which has not its own peculiar tradition. There are certain superstitions common to both countries. Like the Breton female peasants, who wash their linen by the river-side, the Javanese Wéwi take the form of beautiful women, to attract travellers to the banks of the streams; only that at Java, the mystic belief, instead of possessing the soft, sad, and naïvely poetical colour which characterizes the Breton superstitions, is wild and rude, like the theatre on which they are enacted, like that volcanic country where nature seems ever disposed to revolt against the hand that created it.

At distant intervals a few singular examples, unexplained and inexplicable, like that which forms the basis of this story, make their appearance, and, like a meteor, traverse whole ages, leaving behind a train of light which keeps alive among populations the belief that the knowledge which confers supernatural prerogatives upon men, and which their fathers had brought from the banks of the Nile, or the borders of the Ganges, is not lost, and that there arises from generation to generation some superior being to revive its privileges.

And are not we at the present day still in doubt? Are there not certain highly-nervous, exalted, privileged

intelligences ready to affirm the fact of having been in close communion with two mysterious worlds, which no knowledge has hitherto been able to penetrate, and of which no ascertained assured existence can anywhere be found? Do not the invocation of the spirit of Samuel, recorded in the Bible, and the apparition of the phantom of Cæsar, related by Plutarch, come to the aid of those who say we live between two worlds,—the world of the dead and the world of immortals? What was known about infinity before the commencement of the fifteenth century,—before the invention of the telescope, with which Galileo gazed upon the broad expanse of the heavens,—and of the microscope, with which Swammerdam investigated the wonders of the earth? Nothing: nothing of the infinitely great; nothing of the infinitely small.

Swammerdam caught a faint glimpse of the infinite living—the abyss of life—the millions upon millions, millions of times multiplied, of unknown beings, which the imagination of Dante—in other words, the imagination of the man who has looked with the most unfaltering and profoundest attention upon things under the earth—had not dared to dream. So far we had relied upon our senses, and we then discovered that our senses had deceived us, or rather, were powerless. Before the infinity of the heavens above, Galileo uttered a cry of joy, and sprang forward in ecstasy. Before the infinity of the world beneath, Swammerdam uttered a cry of terror, and recoiled in alarm. A telescope was discovered for the infinitely great; a microscope was discovered for the infinitely little. Who is there to assert that some instrument may not yet be discovered for the infinitely diaphanous, and that we shall then see, in actual vision, that ladder of angels ascending from earth to heaven which Jacob witnessed in his dream?

This was Thsermaï's conviction; it was with the view of turning to his own profit the position which Hurruck might possess among the adepts of magic, that he had decided to give him so cordial a reception. "Hurruck," he said, as they moved away from the grave together, and

seeing him still thoughtful, "I wager that you would like, at this moment, to possess the power of restoring her whom you have lost to life."

"Why?" replied Hurruck, with affected indifference. "When the wind has stripped the branches of the teak tree of its leaves, does not the sun immediately clothe it with a fresh beauty which delights our eyes?"

"Do you believe that some men have the power of bringing the dead to life again?"

"No," replied Hurruck, briefly.

"And yet it is asserted that there is a knowledge which enables some to govern the spirits which give life."

"Fire alone can do what you say, but only with the loss of the material substance; it frees the soul from its envelope, and transfers it to another body, but it cannot render to the latter the form which has been consumed in its purification."

"In that case," said Thsermaï, whose object was to bring the Gueber to converse about Noungal, "the genii, which in this country are called the Barkasahans, are more powerful than fire; for it is said that they can do what the god you adore cannot."

"Let them try, then, to contend with the father of Ormuzd," replied Hurruck, with disdain.

"Has my friend Hurruck, who knows so many things, ever met any of the Barkasahans?"

"Yes," said Hurruck.

"Indeed!" replied Thsermaï, affecting surprise; "when and where?"

"Your lordship is not frank with him you term your friend; like the little viper bidoudak, he winds round and round himself before he arrives where he is anxious to go."

"What do you mean?"

"Because the worthy Lord Thsermaï," replied Hurruck, with an assurance which, if it did not manifest any knowledge of divination, at least proved the possession of a profound perspicacity, "merely gave his hand to Hurruck

because he wished Hurruck to deliver him from the Barkasahan who is trying to work his destruction."

"And what is the name of this Barkasahan?" returned the Javanese, whose confidence had increased when he perceived how surely the juggler had divined his thoughts.

"At this moment the name of the Barkasahan is Noungal; but a Barkasahan has not had one name only; he has ten, without reckoning those which he reserves."

"Noungal is my friend, Noungal is my brother: I do not believe what you say. Tell me about the Barkasahans; enumerate the various prerogatives they possess."

"No, it were better that I should keep silent. The bird which indicates the presence of the tiger is silent when he perceives that the hunter of the woods is merely the pursuer of peacocks and guinea-fowls."

"Speak, Hurruck, speak," exclaimed Thsermaï, stopping his companion abruptly, as they were approaching the buildings of the palace; "and if you will serve me, I will make you, instead of a common juggler, a powerful lord and a wise minister of his master's wishes."

"He who has acquired the secret of death, who holds in his right hand the collar-bones of Sehlomab, and in his left the branch of the flowering almond-tree, is far above all afflictions and fears. He knows the reason of the past, the present, and the future; he obliges nature to reveal her secrets at his will and pleasure; in the name of Archiman he rules the elements, and makes them his slaves. Such are the privileges of the Barkasahan."

"And have you penetrated the mysteries of his existence?"

"Yes; the Barkasahan, like the vampires who feed on the blood of the dead, prolongs his life indefinitely by adding to the length of his own days those of which he deprives others."

"Explain yourself."

"By his infernal counsels, by the knowledge he possesses of their passions, the Barkasahan induces them to

extinguish of their own accord the celestial fire which the hand of Ormuzd has kindled within them, by laying violent hands upon themselves. Then it is that Ormuzd allows them to take possession of the hours which those accursed beings had yet to live, but which they had rejected."

"And is there no means of rendering oneself master of the secret which makes them so powerful,—of sharing with them that authority which is greater than that of all the kings of the earth?"

"If I knew, I would not tell you, Thsermaï."

"So that there is no chance of contending successfully against those terrible beings, and any attempt at resistance would be futile?"

"No; man can do much when cunning is combined with strength."

"I understand you: you typify cunning, and I strength; and you propose that we should combine against the common enemy?"

"The Barkasahan is no enemy of mine; the worm that crawls through the fields does not excite his attention."

"Noungal not your enemy?" said Thsermaï, in an excited voice, and desirous to kindle a feeling of hate in the heart of the Gueber; "did he not promise to give you the fair Rangoun as your reward if you would aid him in his projects against the Christian, by intoxicating him with the fumes of your opium?"

"Well?"

"Well! instead of giving her to you, did he not leave her to be bitten by the serpents?—did he not show her dying, but still beautiful and lovely in her death, with another not yourself, beside her?"

"If that be so I am justly punished, and had no reason for hating the Christian. Besides, how do I know that it was Noungal who opened the basket where the serpents were confined?" Thsermaï flushed under his copper-coloured skin; he feared for a moment that, notwithstanding the torpor in which Hurruck had been

plunged, the latter might probably have observed him when he untied the fastenings of the fatal basket. "Yes, it was he, I assure you."

"From the moment you assert it, master, Hurruck has no longer a doubt," replied the juggler simply.

"You see, then, that you must revenge yourself on this man; and, as you said just now, by ruse and strength we shall succeed. I will spare neither my labour nor my riches to effect that. Come into my palace, not as a beggar but as my guest, and pray to your god that we may succeed; and if success be ours, I will change the poor juggler into a wealthy man." Hurruck moved his shoulders slightly with a gesture as indicative of acquiescence as of indifference. Thsermaï then introduced Hurruck into the inner chambers.

CHAPTER XXI.

In the evening mirth and enjoyment reigned through the whole palace. It seemed as if the hope of preserving Arroa had restored Thsermaï to life. The gardens were illuminated with a thousand lights; the echoes of the mountains repeated the harmonies of the gambang and the chelempung; the bedayas, some wearing helmets of gold, with boddices of embroidered velvet, and wide petticoats of red silk caught up at the sides with diamond clasps, showing their well-formed limbs encircled with rings of gold; while others, clothed in splendid Albanian costume, were engaged in dancing a ballet, full of passionate pantomimic action.

Stretched upon a soft, rich carpet, Thsermaï was tranquilly inhaling the fumes of a Persian narghilé, the bowl of which was decorated with rich paintings, and inlaid with gold and silver. The lovely Arroa was leaning her head upon the breast of the Adipati; her tresses, blacker than

the raven's wing, softly caressed her master's face ; from time to time the eyes and lips of the beautiful young girl smiled lovingly at Thsermaï, who, more fascinated and subjugated by her smile than by the graceful attitudes of the dancers, placed the jewelled amber mouthpiece of the narghilé to her lips in order that she in her turn might enjoy the perfumed vapours of the tambeki.

Within a few paces of the group formed by the prince and his favourite, sat Hurruck the juggler, who contemplated this scene with an abstracted gaze, while his eyes were lighted up every few moments with a gleam of wrath and hatred. He had resisted his host's earnest persuasions to satisfy his passion for opium. Hurruck seemed determined to renounce the powerful sensations produced by the narcotic ; as if he feared that his intoxication might again evoke the corpse which the panther had disentombed in the morning, he contented himself by chewing a little betel, which, in accordance with the custom of the natives, he mixed with quick-lime and the areca-nut. At the moment the dances were most animated, a great noise was heard in the interior of the palace, which overpowered the sounds of the concert. Thsermaï demanded the reason of the disturbance, and his servants dragged before him an old man, whom they had detected in the act of penetrating into the apartments devoted to the use of the bedayas.

As soon as he beheld Arroa the old man uttered a cry in which grief and joy had an equal share. He stretched out his hands towards her, and would have thrown himself into her arms had not the retainers of the Adipati held him back.

When he recognized in this old man the Beduin who had claimed his daughter at Meester Cornelis's, the brows of Thsermaï were knitted in savage vexation. As for Arroa, the sight of her father, of this old man in mean and ragged attire, with his hands and knees stained with blood, and of the anguish reflected in his face, made no impression upon her. Not a frown disturbed the harmony of her lovely features ; not a single vein in her pale cheeks

was injected with blood; it seemed as if this glorious creature was dead to every natural sentiment; she sat silent and cold as a statue, merely making a sign to the slaves who were waving enormous fans of peacock-feathers in front of her to accelerate the movement of the fans.

"Have you well considered, Beduin," said Thsermaï to Argalenka, "that your flight from my domains has alone condemned you? Have you well considered, that in penetrating my palace you have incurred the penalty of death?"

"I only considered that my child was here, and that was all. During the last sixteen hours I have dragged myself on my hands and knees to where she was."

"Look at her well, then, old man; for, by Mahomet, you will never see her more—unless, indeed, men can still see in the dark grave which will shortly be yours."

"Your will be done, my lord; for you say truly, the sight of my child is so infinite a happiness, that, having once seen her, I shall not regret my life."

As he pronounced these words, Argalenka wept bitterly, and his tears fell upon his white beard. By his looks, full of love and entreaty, he attempted to attract Arroa's attention, but she did not seem to be aware of his presence.

"You do not recognize me, Arroa?" he said. "Alas! misery and hunger, and living in the forests, have changed me greatly. You too are no longer the same; still, in spite of your garments of silk and gold, and your diadem of jewels, which bear little resemblance, it is true, to the poor dress you used to wear in our cottage, and to the flowers which you twined in your hair, my heart said to me at once, 'There she is!' But you love me still, Arroa, do you not?—you still love him who cradled you on his knees as a child, you who for fourteen years were his pride and happiness? Is it possible that one can cease to love one's father?"

"What is there now in common between Arroa, the favourite of Thsermaï, and a wretched Beduin like you?" said the Javanese brutally.

When he heard the Adipati fulfil the prediction which the man he had met on the highway the previous evening had foreshadowed, Argalenka felt struck to the heart; his knees sunk under him, he clasped his hands together, and, stretching them out towards his daughter, exclaimed:

"Arroa, lose not a moment in contradicting your lord; tell him that whatever may be the rank to which fortune calls you, it is still the blood of Argalenka which flows in your veins; tell him that there is between us a powerful bond of union which is the work of God, and that it belongs not to men to break it in sunder. Can I, O Heavenly Father! can I have brought into being that which can have given thee offence? Thou knowest well, Arroa, that when we were living in the plain, my whole study was to please thee, my every thought to make thee happy; still, I know that when one wishes to do too much, the dearest object of one's wishes is often missed. But, if it be so, you will forgive me, Arroa! you will forgive me before I die! you will still have for me one of those sweet smiles, one of those loving caresses which you were so prodigal of in former days! you will leave me the consolation of thinking that you will sometimes pray to Buddha upon the grave where he who was once your father will sleep for ever!"

As he spoke, sobs and tears choked the utterance of the poor Beduin; he looked at Arroa, Hurruck, and Thsermaï, one after the other, and, seeing that his daughter remained insensible and answered him not a word, his senses almost abandoned him.

"Can it be possible," he cried, "that my despair does not touch her!—can she see her father weep without saying, 'Father, I see your tears!'" And, with a sudden movement, the Beduin escaped from those who held him, and darting towards her, seized hold of her hand. The hand seemed cold and senseless as marble; in touching it Argalenka fancied he had touched a corpse; he staggered back, with a cry of horror on his lips.

"This is not Arroa, although these are her features. You were right, Hurruck. Ah! I thank Buddha, for if

my daughter had been alive and had renounced her father, I should have cursed the day he had given her to me, cursed the mother that bore her: it is Arroa, but she is dead."

"Seize him!" cried Thsermaï.

"My lord Adipati, you can take my life, the gift of Buddha, as you formerly robbed me of my means,—as you robbed me of my daughter. I do not curse you, for the god who sees you is there to do it for me; he will know to speak better and louder than I can; I leave you in his hands; were you the powerful sovereign of the whole world, were you to hide yourself in the deepest recesses of Pangerango, he would know how to reach you. I have said all now; I regret nothing, and shall bless the moment which shall deliver me from the sight of that odious phantom," he added, pointing to his daughter.

"Let my orders be obeyed," said Thsermaï.

"My lord," interrupted Hurruck, "this man is mad; you see it, since he does not even recognize his child. Are not those whom Heaven has deprived of their reason held sacred in the eyes of all true believers?"

Thsermaï trembled with ill-restrained wrath and indignation; he was sorely tempted, despite the sacred character with which Hurruck had just invested Argalenka, to gratify his anger by depriving the Beduin of life; but at that moment he was surrounded with Mussulmans, and to satisfy his ambitious projects he had need of all his retainers: he resolved to sacrifice his anger to prudence, and directed the old man to be confined in one of the dungeons of the palace.

Arroa remained perfectly unmoved by this scene; but when Argalenka, led off by Thsermaï's attendants, had disappeared in the darkness, she turned round towards her master, and pointed to the Bedayas, who were standing still as if paralyzed with terror, with a pretty gesture of rebellious impatience.

At a sign from Thsermaï the dances were renewed, and continued until the night was far advanced.

CHAPTER XXII.

During the few first days which succeeded the entrance of the beautiful negress into the house of Eusebius Van den Beck, the latter did not even remark her presence; he was completely absorbed by his mercantile affairs, by the success which seemed to attend every undertaking he attempted, as, indeed, had been the case since the first day; he calculated with immense delight the months during which he should be obliged to continue those exertions in order to repair the considerable loss he had just suffered; and since he at last saw fortune turning in his favour, he was more than ever decided to hide the knowledge of it from Esther, as well as the fault of which he had been involuntarily guilty.

Thus, at the beginning of his struggle against fate, he only returned home to take rest, and quitted it again at daybreak. Esther found herself more neglected than ever; but as she now saw her husband always light-hearted and smiling, though astonished at the assiduity with which he laboured to grow rich, she was no longer disposed to complain. And yet Eusebius's felicity was not altogether cloudless. Occasionally a sudden thought chilled his heart with terror, amidst the ebullitions of delight which his recent profits caused him. He asked himself whether, since the fever of becoming rich had taken possession of him, he had not ceased entertaining for his wife that undivided affection with which she had for so long a time inspired him. It seemed as if the jingling of the pieces of gold, among which his fingers moved restlessly, sounded like Basilius's infernal laugh; he fancied, too, that he saw his profile upon each coin.

But Eusebius was too much interested in proving himself mistaken easily to give way to these hallucinations: he argued that the thirst of riches which Esther

was to share with him, was still a way of showing his affection for her; that he only longed for them thus ardently because he desired to lavish them upon her. The longer he continued the easier his task became; he had acquired the conviction, after these internal struggles had lasted some time, that Esther maintained undisputed possession of his heart; he had so thoroughly thrust aside the remembrance of Doctor Basilius, that he only thought of him as of a disagreeable nightmare, which leaves a painful impression behind it; and he at last ended by doubting the reality of what had passed between them. Yet, although there was nothing in Esther's manner or countenance to lead Eusebius to suppose that she fretted under the prolonged hours of solitude to which he condemned her, he could not succeed completely in stifling the reproaches of his conscience; but he endeavoured to pacify them by supplying her in amusements what he deprived her of in happiness. To please him, his young wife found herself obliged to place her former calm and peaceful home in harmony with her husband's constant excitement—to pass hours and days in a whirl of society which only rendered the recollection of the past more bitter than ever.

One night, after a grand dinner party, in which Eusebius, who was gradually acquiring the habits of the colonists, had drunk with a disregard for sobriety contrary to his custom, he was sleeping in his bedroom which communicated by a small passage with his wife's sleeping apartment. Suddenly, and while under the influence of the stupor arising from the wine he had drunk, it seemed as if a pair of burning lips were applied to his own: he awoke with a start, and sitting up in his bed, stretched out his arms fruitlessly; but he heard a light footstep over the matting which covered the floor, and the rustling of the silk hangings before the doorway which led into Esther's room. Eusebius rose hurriedly, and ran to his wife's apartment. Esther was sleeping calmly and gently; the cradle in which her child was lying was placed beside her bed. Eusebius remained for a moment plunged in

deep thought; supposing that he must have been the sport of a dream, he returned to his bed.

On the following morning, before proceeding to the old town, Eusebius went to take leave of his wife; he found the young nurse, whom Esther was reproving gently, sitting near her. On inquiring what cause of complaint Cora had given her mistress, she replied that for some time past, and apparently without any reason, the young negress seemed to be burdened with some secret distress; she drew his attention to her face, how thin it had become, to the utter prostration to which she seemed, even at that moment, to be a sufferer; and while giving her husband these explanations, Esther continued to address the most affectionate reproaches to Cora upon her want of confidence towards a mistress who had so soon and so warmly become attached to her. Cora did not offer a word in reply, but sat rocking the child in her arms, kissing it from time to time with a feverish passion. Every kiss she pressed upon its lips was followed by a look directed at Eusebius.

If this by-play escaped Esther, whose back was turned to the young nurse, Eusebius himself lost nothing of it; there was so strange an expression in these caresses, and Cora's eyes gleamed with so much passion, that it seemed as if the child was not really the object of the negress's regard; he remembered the burning kiss which had been imprinted on his lips the previous night, and he smiled involuntarily. The time had passed away since Eusebius had felt startled at a thought which had reference to one whom Heaven had bestowed upon him as a wife. If the magnificent beauty of the negress left him cold and indifferent, it was evident, at least, that his delicacy of feeling, the accompaniment of every deep and sincere sentiment, was blunted in him. There was so wide a difference between him and Cora—between the master and the slave—that it never occurred to him for a moment to feel offended at the affection she had so passionately and so naïvely expressed. He contemned this danger too heartily, to honour it with any feeling of ap-

prehension, and especially to confide to Esther his fancied discovery. Everything became a matter of calculation with Eusebius Van den Beck, as is invariably the case with persons who affect positiveness in all business transactions ; he discounted the value of the most indifferent acts of his life.

As we have previously shown, Esther had become singularly attached to the young girl whom she had entrusted with the charge of nursing her child ; she passed with her the long and weary hours of isolation which her husband's occupations imposed upon her. Cora was in this respect doubly useful to Eusebius, who was very careful not to destroy the good harmony which existed between the mistress and the slave, at a time when this good harmony served his own interests. "Would it be possible for him to replace Cora near Esther ? Would not his wife, deprived of the pleasure and interest which she took in the young girl's society, require him to leave his counting-house to remain at home with her ?"

These reflections passed like a cloud across Eusebius's brain, and the smile which we observed flit across his lips was the only attention he bestowed upon a manœuvre which would justly have aroused his alarm, had he but summoned his memory to his assistance.

Eusebius was accordingly compelled to bestow some recognition upon the young nurse. Whenever he passed through the courtyard, or the gardens, or from one apartment to another, he always found her on his passage ; it seemed as if she multiplied herself so as to be in every place where Eusebius was. Sometimes he observed her wandering through the jasmine and rhododendron groves of the pleasure-grounds, her head sunk upon her bosom, and the velvet-like softness of her lovely eyes reddened by her tears ; at others, on looking through the blind, he perceived her seated upon a stone, in the burning sun, opposite his windows, gazing without seeing, listening without hearing, transported body and soul into the ideal world of reveries.

If he retired to one of the numerous rooms in his hotel,

to devote himself to some of the calculations which occupied him day and night, and fancied himself alone, suddenly he would hear a soft monotonous air chanted behind him in an unknown tongue, and turning round, observe, crouching in one of the corners of the room, what seemed like a figure of black marble, draped in its beautiful garments of white linen, hushing her little charge to sleep with a song of her own country. On other occasions, as he passed through the corridors, he would hear a light, stealthy step, scarcely seeming to touch the ground, advancing towards him, and he found it to be Cora, who, as he passed by, drew herself up against the wall, but whose burning breath, however, he felt pass across his face. If he needed anything, if he required any little service to be done for him, it was invariably the negress who presented herself to do it; and if her lips were silent, her looks invariably spoke for her heart, and addressed the same language of entreaty and passionate regard to Eusebius.

Formerly the manner in which he was thus beset would at least have annoyed Eusebius, but since his heart and mind had lost that austere severity which a high and holy passion for a legitimate object produces, the present importunity merely gratified his self-love; and in the occasional expressions of compassion which escaped him when he remarked the state to which a mad affection had reduced the slave, there was a far more gratified vanity than pity.

One evening Eusebius was seated at a little table in his wife's apartment, engaged as usual in estimating his gains, as if the calculation of the daily increase of his fortune had been his sweetest relaxation after a hard day's work. Esther held the child upon her knees, endeavouring to win a smile from its little lips; Cora was seated upon a mat beside her; behind her, and grouped in various positions, were Esther's other women.

Suddenly, as he raised his eyes towards his wife, Eusebius saw a yellow ray of light, like gold, sparkle between her fingers. It was a large stone in a metal setting, which

the negress had given her mistress, who was making it sparkle in the light, to attract the child's attention.

Eusebius snatched the stone from Esther's hands with an abruptness that alarmed her, and, without addressing a word to her, began to examine it attentively. "Where did you get this stone from?" he said at last, in a voice which emotion rendered trembling and agitated.

"Cora gave it to me," replied his young wife; "but what can there be in this piece of stone to interest you so greatly, dearest?"

Eusebius made a sign to Esther's attendants to leave the room, and to Cora to remain. "Cora," he said, addressing the latter, "have you ever wished to be free?"

"Yes," she replied; "before the child which yours replaced, had died, I longed for liberty, as the fairest inheritance which a mother could transmit to her son. But now I care for it no longer."

"Poor Cora!" said Esther, who fancied she detected in the negress's words the expression of an attachment for herself in acknowledgment of that which her mistress testified for her.

But for Eusebius, Cora's tone of voice agreed too perfectly with her looks to deceive him as to the feeling which had dictated it.

"Cora," he replied, "if the hopes which are excited as I look upon this pebble were to be realized, it is no poor and mean liberty I should offer you, but wealth; that is to say, the possession of everything in this world your heart can wish for, of everything which can constitute your happiness here below."

"No," said Cora, shaking her head. "Cora has nothing to hope for in this world. Heaven itself could not give her what her heart longs for."

"Do you not see the poor girl is always regretting the loss of her child?" said Esther in a low voice, bending towards her husband; "do not arouse these unhappy recollections in her."

"As you please," said Eusebius, who could not help

colouring; "but Cora is young, and the grief which oppresses her may be effaced."

Although Eusebius's reply was conveyed in a low tone of voice, Cora had heard him.

"No," she answered; "Cora will have ceased to live before her grief fades away."

"Perhaps you have an affection for some one in this world," replied Eusebius, who abandoning himself to his own thoughts, did not think of the reprehensible action he committed in taking advantage of his wife's compassion to turn the negress's regard for himself to profit.

"Indeed I have," said Cora with deep feeling.

"Would it not please you, then, to be the means of making those happy who have treated you more like their own child than a slave?"

"What must I do to serve them? I will lay down my blood, my life, for you."

"Good Cora," said Esther.

"Less than that will do," returned Eusebius; "try merely to recall your recollections of the past. Where did you find this stone?"

"I remember as if it were only yesterday that it came into my hands, and yet it is a very long time ago."

"Speak, Cora, we are listening to you."

"My first master was a white man, who bought my mother when I was not older than this little child in my arms. We lived in the district called the Préangers, at the foot of Mount Galung-Gung. One night—I had then seen six rainy seasons succeed six seasons of burning heat—we were awakened by the cries of those who lived in the same house, and by deep and prolonged rumbling sounds. My mother rose in frantic haste, and hurried out of the hut, carrying me in her arms. The earth trembled under our feet, and the walls behind us were giving way; a horrible spectacle met us outside. The mountain was covered with a thick smoke, which discharged columns of flame that ascended to the clouds; the atmosphere was impregnated with a close and

fetid odour, which made it impossible to breathe; we heard a torrent of boiling water falling in cataracts from rock to rock; the gloomy light which the flames of the mountain gave out showed us the trees, houses, and hills disappearing from the view, burnt up, or swept away by the torrent. The clouds of vapour it left behind it indicated its progress. Barely the distance of a mile separated it from the spot where we were standing terror stricken. All fled; the women carrying the youngest and feeblest children in their arms, as my mother did me; the men laden with their most valuable goods, or driving their cattle before them. The horrible roar of the waters which pursued us, approached nearer and nearer; all hastened their pace, but the burden with which my mother was laden impeded her progress and overpowered her. Soon those who had quitted their homes with ourselves outstripped us; soon, too, her step grew more and more languid, and her limbs tottered under her. At this moment a man passed close by us, borne along by his horse's rapid flight; it was our master. 'Throw me your child,' he said to my mother; 'it is the sole means of saving your life.' My mother's only answer was to press me more closely to her bosom. Our master, furious at a disobedience which might cost him two slaves instead of one, broke out into the wildest imprecations and threats, and attempted to strike my mother with a weapon he held in his hand. This fresh danger supplied her with renewed courage; she began to fly before her master as she had a short time before fled from the boiling mud with which the Galung-Gung covered the plain. She had placed me on her back to be less restrained in her movements. Soon I felt upon my shoulders the hot breath of our master's horse. Suddenly my mother threw herself upon a rock that skirted the road, and climbed up its side with a strength which, in her exhausted condition, seemed impossible. To the furious exclamation which escaped our master's lips when he saw she was escaping him, succeeded another full of terror and anguish. As he turned his horse round, he

observed that the torrent had greatly increased its forward movement. Spurring his horse, he attempted to leap it across a little ravine, into which the boiling mud had begun to flow; but stifled by the sulphurous vapours which escaped from it, the animal failed to reach the opposite side, and both fell into the boiling gulf, which closed over its prey. The rock upon which my mother had taken refuge was upon the side of Mount Taïkoekoe, which abuts upon the Galung-Gung. Had she been able to scale the mountain, we should both have been saved; but behind us was a perpendicular wall of rock, which we were unable to cross, and the boiling mud and water at our feet prevented us from reaching the heights by another path. My mother stood motionless upon the rock, where she had taken refuge, trusting that, perhaps, the muddy torrent might not reach us. Its exhalations threatened us with suffocation; but fortunately at the very spot where we had fled for safety, a little stream trickled down the side of the mountain. She made me drink some of the water. In falling in a cascade from a great height, it had hollowed out a kind of little basin in the rock. She plunged me into the cool, clear water. Still she perceived, with feelings of terror, that the danger increased every moment. The burning stream still rose. In a short time it was only a few paces below us, and surging against the foot of the eminence upon which we had taken refuge. My mother caught me up in her arms again, embraced me closely, endeavoured to quiet my childish terrors, and succeeded so well that I soon fell fast asleep as quietly as though I had been in our hut. When I awoke, the sun was high in the horizon; my mother was leaning against the rock, still holding me clasped in her arms; she seemed as if she, too, were asleep. I disengaged myself as softly as possible from her embrace, so as not to awaken her, and put my foot on the plateau; it was still burning hot, but the torrent from the volcano had subsided, and was only visible in the ravine in which our master had met his death. It was then only I perceived that my mother's feet and legs

were frightfully burnt. I called her, but she returned me no answer; I shook her, but she did not move. I was afraid of her silence, as well as of the solitude in which I found myself, and began to cry; but I was then so very young that my distress did not last long. My attention was soon attracted by observing in the hollow of the rock, in which my mother had plunged me the previous evening, some bright-looking stones like the one you have in your hand.

"The water which streamed down the side had cleansed the rock from the black mud, and the stones lay sparkling in the sun's rays. I was amusing myself with them when some men, who were searching for those who had fallen victims to the catastrophe, found us; they bore away my mother and took me with them, but not before I had concealed among my clothes the largest and most beautiful of the stones which had served me to play with. It was not long before I understood how my mother had died in preserving me from all harm, had sacrificed her own life to save mine; and that glittering pebble reminds me of at least one unhappy circumstance in my past life."

"Poor Cora!" said Esther, as she passed her white slender fingers through the thick tresses of the young negress; "you have, indeed, been a sufferer, but I will try to make the remainder of your existence happier than its commencement."

Cora cast down her eyes and made no answer. Nothing, however, could make Eusebius forget the object he had in view.

"If," he said, "you were ten years old when this occurred, you would, perhaps, still be able to find the rock where the scene you have just described took place."

"If you tell me that it would please you, you can fasten a bandage round my eyes, and in the darkest night I would lead you there," said Cora, with a confidence full of energy.

"Why do you tease the poor child," interrupted Esther, "about such nonsense? What value can you possibly attach to this stone?"

"Esther," said Eusebius, lowering his voice as if he feared it might be heard through the walls, "this stone is a diamond."

"Indeed!" returned his wife, looking at the precious object with a child-like curiosity.

"Yes, a diamond; and if, as there is every reason to suppose, there are others where it was found,—if, in following the stream, which has probably drifted them down its course, we could find the bed where they all come from, imagine what would be the wealth of the possessor of such a treasure!" As he spoke, Eusebius's features were lighted up with so feverish an animation, and his eyes glistened with so singular a brilliancy, that Esther was terrified at their expression.

"Ah, Eusebius," said his wife, "have you forgotten the time when you wished to repudiate our present fortune? What has become of your projects of ridding yourself of this troublesome wealth as soon as it had enabled us to ensure for our children that which formerly was our only ambition, an honest and honourable mediocrity?" This reproach, probably the first she had ever addressed to Eusebius, did not move him in the slightest degree; but for the first time, also, it irritated him against his wife.

From the very moment that the heart to which one appeals has lost its former blind devotion, it is an unpardonable crime to place it in the wrong; it feels galled, humiliated, wounded, without being convinced; like all tyrants, the passions are deaf to those who do not flatter them.

In such a position of affairs it is merely increasing the wrong we have already done if we attempt to explain our reasons with tenderness and affection, as a second cause of grievance is thereby added to the first. Esther's remark falling upon the feverish passion of cupidity which at that moment embarrassed her husband's mind, produced the effect of oil upon fire; far from calming, it only irritated him. He replied with bitterness; defended vehemently what he termed his love for his family and his regard for the welfare of those dear to him; and the tears which fell

from Esther's eyes when she implored his forgiveness did not touch him in the least.

Although Esther's resignation to her husband's every wish left him no pretext for continuing his anger, it was very long before peace was re-established between the two. It was useless for Esther to disavow the unlucky words which had raised this storm; Eusebius returned to the subject incessantly, as a gladiator to the fragment of his sword, with which to defend himself from the attacks of a well-armed enemy; he could not make up his mind to forget her remark, and his ill-will was so decided in its expression that, after the short cold "Good night" she received from her husband, she was reduced to envy the kind and affable smile with which Eusebius answered Cora, when the negress assured her master that, if he wished it, he might keep as long as he pleased the precious stone which had been the primary cause of this domestic misunderstanding.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The next day Eusebius rose as soon as it was light, but instead of proceeding into Batavia direct, in accordance with his usual custom, he turned to the left when he reached Steenen-Overlaats, and entered the Chinese campong.

Although still very early, the laborious population of that quarter already thronged the streets; the ambulatory provision dealers, carrying their small stock in trade with them, were moving about in every direction, announcing by deafening cries and loud discordant instruments their various wares—vegetables, fish, meat, live animals,—which they carried in large baskets slung across their shoulders like the beam of a pair of scales; the tradesmen's assistants blocked up the door-steps of their masters' shops, energetically employed in cleaning the elegant

signs suspended vertically across the pavement, so as to expose to the public by a double announcement in letters of gold, the claims of their respective masters to its confidence; and next the merchant himself appeared with his *sonan-pam*, rattling the balls briskly to summon good and avert bad luck. The shops or warehouses were crammed with every kind of production from the celestial empire: there were objects in ivory, upon which the workman had exhausted every resource of cunning and design which the Creator had bestowed upon man in manual skill, fans of mother-of-pearl, of enamel, of sandal-wood, handscreens, rolls of paper painted in water-colours, articles of furniture in bamboo and rattan, silks of every texture and colour, from the most magnificent tissues heavy with embroidery, down to the modest pongis; heaps of articles of consumption, among others swallow-nests, sea-slugs, sharks' fins, and occasionally the *gin-seng*, that general article of food among the Chinese.

Eusebius was too absorbed in his own thoughts to pay any attention to the picturesque side of this scene: he was looking for a dealer in precious stones, and having at last found one, he entered the shop, and presenting Cora's jewel, begged the jeweller to examine it.

The Chinese tried it against the grindstone, inspected it carefully all over, by the aid of a magnifying-glass, and released his hold upon it with a sigh of profound regret, which would have proved to Eusebius, even had the man not told him so, that it was a black diamond, and a black diamond of the greatest value. Eusebius threw a piece of money upon the counter to recompense the Chinese for his disappointment in not being able to become the possessor of so precious an object, and in the highest spirits proceeded to his counting-house in Batavia, which he left again in the evening much earlier than was his usual custom.

On arriving at home, he perceived Cora seated in the

kiosque, in the very spot where Hurruck had established himself. Eusebius was so delighted at the certainty he had acquired, that he felt he must communicate his happiness to some one else; so, instead of passing the negress with an indifferent and disdainful air, as usual he went straight up to her, saying, "It is a diamond you found, Cora, and the most valuable of all, a black diamond."

"The heart of the woman who truly loves is a diamond too," replied Cora, in a low voice; "but less happy than that stone, her dark colour deprives her of her value."

Eusebius did not think it necessary to reply to this sorrowful exclamation; his happiness was too complete to pay any attention to it.

"When every one is asleep in the house come to me in my own room, Cora, I want you to supply me with some information beyond what you gave me yesterday evening."

When Cora heard her master address her in these terms she trembled through her whole frame, her lips, usually as bright and red as coral, turned ashy pale, her eyes closed, and she tottered as if her limbs had been deprived of all power of support.

"It is for the master to command, he will always find his slave obedient and submissive," Cora replied, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

When every one was fast asleep in the house, when the sound of Madame Van den Beck's breathing—for the negress slept close to her young mistress—proved that she too had sunk into a heavy slumber, Cora stole out of her own bed, and by the little passage we have already spoken of, glided softly into Eusebius's room. The poor girl was almost suffocated by emotion; she could scarcely breathe, her brain seemed to whirl round, her limbs trembled under her; and yet, as if moved or inspired by a power superior to her own, she did not falter in her walk, and her hand drew aside the curtain which hung before the

door of her master's apartment, as soon as she felt the silken hangings under her fingers.

Eusebius was stretched upon the matting which covered the floor, before the immense map which Van de Vele, the engineer, had drawn of the island of Java ; beside him was a pile of books, and upon these books the diamond, which reflected the light of the two candles with which the room was lighted. Eusebius was so absorbed by his topographical study that a few minutes passed before he observed Cora standing by his side. At last he raised his head, and perceiving the negress, he exclaimed, " Cora, you have come just in time, for I have lost myself in this network of mountains, which is more entangled than a skein of thread." But Cora had not heard him.

At the sight of him who had become the master of her heart, as he already was of her life and liberty, the little strength that had remained abandoned her ; she fell upon her knees, took hold of Eusebius's hand, and covered it with kisses, while the hot, burning tears streamed down her flushed and feverish cheeks.

Eusebius could not repress a gesture of disappointment and vexation ; in order to obtain from Cora the information he required, he had closed his eyes to the feelings which had summoned the poor negress to this interview, and it had never occurred to him that what he had regarded as a mere rendezvous for the discussion of business, should at its very commencement assume so unfortunate an aspect. He remained perfectly unmoved in the presence of the poor girl, who writhed at his feet in utter abandonment to her feelings ; the nervous spasms which distorted her body, and made her swarthy bosom, which glistened like ebony, heave tumultuously, left him cold and passionless as ever ; he was indifferent to her tears, unmindful of the despair, scarcely remarking, indeed, the pains she had taken to dress herself to the best advantage, or the coquetry with which she had twined the freshest and sweetest flowers among her tresses.

But it was no longer now, as had formerly been the case, the adored image of Esther which protected Eusebius from these seductions: it was the egotistical calculations of the merchant; and the easy triumph which he thus obtained added an unheard-of strength to this new feeling, and constituted the only ægis which could protect Eusebius in the future. Amid the sobs which escaped from the negress's bosom, Eusebius remembered that only two thin partitions separated him from the apartment where his wife was sleeping; that she might be awakened by the sound, and come before he had obtained from Cora the explanations he needed.

Consequently, if his heart was in no way softened—if his senses remained as unaffected as his heart—he at least compounded with the poor girl, whom it was his interest to humour; from the tacit tolerance with which he had allowed the affection of the young negress to increase and develop itself, he subsided into a kind of moral complicity, which was calculated rather to increase it than otherwise.

In fact, his exhortations to submit to the laws which an inflexible destiny imposed upon her, were such as still to leave in the dim future in which Cora treasured up her affection an opportunity wherein an experiment might be tried; his reproaches were entreaties, his consolations impressed with such a tender concern, that if the poor negress had been obliged to abandon the recollection of what she had probably dreamed, she would have found it again in the face of the unheard-of happiness which every word her master uttered infused into her heart, and which, like some miraculous balm, healed immediately all her wounds.

After the lapse of a few moments, Cora's feverish excitement subsided, and she was soon able to assist Eusebius to determine the precise locality where the incident consequent upon the eruption of the Galunggung had occurred. According to her statement, it would be upon the north side of Mount Taïkoekoe, between the town of Garoët and the village of Sasetzi. The

map showed that a road, practicable for litters, led to the first of these little towns, and, from Garoët, to the particular spot which Cora pointed out as being that where she had discovered the diamond, there was comparatively but a short distance to be performed on horseback.

Eusebius dismissed the young negress, not without having again earnestly recommended her to overcome the inclination she entertained for him; but this was done in such gentle tones, that Cora could scarcely do otherwise than arrive at the conclusion that his langauge was not in accordance with his feelings, and that she had made one step towards overcoming his repugnance to her; the result was, that the following morning, when, in accordance with what had now become her daily habit, Cora met her master in some one of the corridors of the mansion, the latter could not but reply with a few affectionate words to the silent language of the eyes, which the negress employed so expressively, and he had not the courage to feel angry when she caught his hand in her own and pressed it to her lips.

Eusebius thought himself disarmed by the humble and respectful attitude of the slave, but the truth was, that he was without the power to move or act, because a secret already existed between them both; and that, unimportant as this secret might be, yet his accomplice governed him yesterday, and governed him still the following day. Eusebius supported with great impatience the time he would have to wait before beginning the journey he had resolved to undertake in search of the place where she had found the diamonds.

Madame Van den Beck had hardly yet recovered from her recent illness; however confident Eusebius might feel in his own powers of resistance, or however indifferent he might really be to everything which was not purely a matter of business, he was too apprehensive of having to pass days, and weeks, and months perhaps, alone with the beautiful slave, to feel inclined to undertake the journey without Esther. Besides, Cora nursed the child, and to deprive the poor little thing of so necessary an attendant

would have been an act of barbarity at which Eusebius had not yet arrived. His good and affectionate wife, who faithfully translated every expression which crossed her husband's face, guessed what was passing within him, and anticipated his dearest wishes.

One day when, for the hundreth time perhaps, Eusebius inquired when the little fellow would be weaned, his wife smiled in her husband's face, and said that she thought a journey into the mountains would do her good as well as her child.

"A journey in the mountains!" exclaimed Eusebius, who hardly knew what to think of an idea which coincided so thoroughly with his own views.

"Certainly; is not the air purer and fresher there? and shall we not get stronger after the depressing heats from which I have been suffering so much during the last two months? Besides," continued Esther, who wished to spare her husband blushing for the cupidity with which she had formerly reproached him, "as long as we do go somewhere among the mountains, it is a matter of mere indifference to me where it is; we can go in the direction of Mount Taïkoekoe, and it will be an opportunity for you to try and discover whether Cora's diamond has left any brothers and sisters behind it."

"And Cora?" asked Eusebius, almost breathless with expectation.

"We will take Cora with us; I do not intend to be separated from my child, and he cannot do without her."

The nurse entered the room at this moment; she had heard her mistress's last words, and, like Eusebius, although widely different sentiments animated the two, she paused, overcome by emotion. Eusebius threw his arms round his wife's neck, and kissed her over and over again. Alas! it was no longer to Esther that these transports were addressed, but to the diamonds which dazzled his eyes; his imagination showing him heaps of precious stones, which his fingers piled up in bright and glistening masses.

Eusebius displayed such extreme ardour in urging the preparations for their departure, that three days after Esther had broached the subject to her husband the little caravan set out for the interior of the island. They travelled in their own carriage, with post-horses, the rich colonists of Java, where this service is tolerably well organized, being in the habit of travelling in that way; —in a large berlin, drawn by a dozen small but strong active horses, peculiar to the country: several natives followed these horses on foot, it mattered little at what speed they went, encouraging them with voice and gesture; calling the labourers working in the fields by the roadside to help them push and drag the heavy vehicle along, wherever the difficulty of the road impeded their progress, or when the little animals refused to draw them any further.

In this way they advanced as far as Bandong, by passing through Buitenzorg and Tjanzoce: there the road ceased to be practicable for carriages; they were obliged to leave the berlin in the latter town, the women continuing the journey in litters, the men on horseback. On the very evening of their arrival at Garoët, having duly installed his wife in the apartments he had retained for her at the inn, Eusebius, unable to restrain his impatience, descended to the terrace attached to the house, and facing the south, in order that he might observe with a closer attention Mount Taïkoekoe, of which he had only been able during the journey to contemplate the snow-clad summits. To his great surprise Cora had already preceded him: she was leaning upon the bamboo balustrade, which served as a railing to the terrace, with her eyes fixed in earnest gaze upon the sombre mass of the granite mountain, whose base was shrouded in a uniform tinge of violet, while its summit was illumined by the purple hues of the last rays of the setting sun. The negress was so absorbed in contemplation that she did not hear Eusebius approaching: he advanced, and touched her lightly upon the shoulder; she started, turned round, and recognizing her master, uttered a suppressed cry of terror.

"What is the matter, girl?" said Van den Beck; "this is the first time since you have been under my roof that my presence has alarmed you." The smile with which Eusebius accompanied these words did not seem to reassure the young girl; she stood trembling before him, and could do no more than stammer out a few unintelligible words of excuse.

"Really, Cora," continued her master, "you hardly seem like the same person; since we left Weltevreden I have remarked the singular change which has taken place in you. This journey, which at first you were as anxious for as myself, seems now that we are fairly embarked in it, to have become distasteful to you; three or four times I have observed you with tears in your eyes. What is the matter with you?"

"Master, how can you expect me to observe with a quiet heart places which remind me of so many sad events in my life?"

"We have never attempted to hide from you where we have been going; it is absurd to have postponed your lamentations until we had arrived at the end of our journey, for we are there now; yonder is the mountain which hides within its bosom those immense treasures which will soon become ours."

"Master, master," cried Cora, "reflect before you attempt to lay your hand upon them; the spirit of the mountain is as covetous as men, and, like them, he knows how to preserve and defend his treasures." The idea of holding in his possession the inexhaustible source of the wealth he so greedily coveted, blinded Eusebius so completely, that this allusion to supernatural beings, which, from his acquaintance with Basilius, might otherwise have made him tremble, failed in this instance to produce the slightest impression upon him, and he merely shrugged his shoulders. "Master," resumed Cora, "were we not happy in our home at Weltevreden; you, with the enormous fortune which Heaven has already sent you, and in the affection of your wife; I, in contemplating your bliss, and in being able to comfort myself with the com-

passionate indulgence you showed your slave! Ah! why did we ever leave Weltevreden!"

There were tears in the negress's voice, and her tone betrayed how profoundly she was agitated.

"Slave," said Eusebius, almost in a tone of menace, "in spite of your evasions, I have discovered the truth: you have been deceiving me."

"I?" exclaimed Cora, in despair.

"You have deceived me: confess it. The history of the discovery of this diamond is an invention; the existence of the basin filled with stones, like the one you brought away, a mere fable. You have been trifling with me and with my insane credulity: confess it, and I have still sufficient pity left for the mad feeling that made you act as you did—to forgive the falsehoods you have uttered."

"No, master, I have not spoken falsely; oh! do not think it, I implore you. By the spirit of my mother, who died to save my life, I have spoken the truth—I swear."

"Very well," said Eusebius, almost convinced by the energy with which Cora addressed him. "To-morrow, at daybreak, our journey will be resumed; and when we shall have reached the slope of the Taïkoekoe, one side of which looks towards the sea and the other towards the open plain, we shall learn whether Cora has perjured the name of her who brought her into the world."

"No, not to-morrow; not to the Taïkoekoe. Renounce your project, master—renounce going to the mountain."

"Never!" cried Eusebius; "I will not be your dupe, Cora. Were it only to convict you of your shameless assurance, were I obliged to renounce the hope you have kindled in my breast, I am resolved to-morrow to try and discover the plateau on the wall of rocks, from the summit of which a little stream descends drifting down the diamonds in its course. Ah! you see that my memory is good, Cora."

"If precious stones can alone touch your heart, you have but to speak, master, and I will go to all the rivulets of the other mountains, will search their beds, will tear my fingers against the rocks, and will then bring you the rich harvest, without keeping one for myself, I swear."

"Brainsick girl! as if there existed in the whole island another bed like the one you have described. Come, Cora, I repeat, this journey will either enrich us all, or convict you of falsehood; be prepared, therefore, to continue it at daybreak to-morrow, and to serve me as my guide."

"No, find another guide," replied the negress, shaking her head; "Cora cannot and will not lead you to the Taïkoekoe."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Eusebius, yielding to a sudden impulse of anger, and raising his hand as if to strike the negress. But, ashamed of his burst of passion, he added, in a gentler voice,—"And this is the boundless affection which Cora seemed to feel for her master! This is the love which would cost her, she said, her life, and which fails at the merest obedience, at a compliance with the simplest request!"

This appeal to the passion which devoured the poor girl—an appeal which, in the dread of seeing his hopes deceived, Eusebius had made up his mind to address to her, produced an unexpected effect. Cora threw herself before her master's knees, and clasped her arms round them.

"Let the hand you have raised fall upon Cora," she exclaimed; "strike your slave, spurn her under your feet, but breathe not a word of doubt or suspicion against the passion which fills her whole being. No, rather than see you doubt the devotion which is as hopeless as it will be unrecompensed, I would sooner suffer the most awful death, I would sooner——"

At this moment Cora paused suddenly with a hoarse cry, as if an invisible hand had seized her by the throat, as if some horrible vision had paralysed her utterance; her

limbs trembled convulsively, her breathing grew hard and difficult, her haggard eyes were turned in the direction of Mount Taïkoekoe. Eusebius followed her gaze, and perceived a column of reddish fire rising from the base of the mountain, from amidst the trees which served it as a belt. To him, this was nothing more than a very natural occurrence—probably the bivouac of some hunter; and it seemed absurd to attribute Cora's sudden terror to so simple a cause.

"Well," he said, turning towards her.

"Since you insist upon it, master," replied the young girl, in a voice which sounded almost choking from emotion, "I will go—I will lead you to the spot where the diamonds are slumbering in their crystal bed."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Eusebius was too much agitated to find the rest he needed. The night had not completed two-thirds of its course when he quitted his bed, and, taking the greatest precautions to avoid waking Esther, bent his steps towards the couch which served the negress as a bed. He softly moved aside the cradle in which his child was sleeping, but, to his great surprise, did not see the young girl lying on the matting. Eusebius could not resist a feeling of the most bitter anguish, for he supposed that, yielding to the repugnance she had manifested the previous evening for this expedition, Cora had taken flight. He hurried downstairs precipitately, to inquire from his servants what had become of her. As he crossed the verandah which surrounded the house, on his way to the building where the servants were sleeping, he heard a deep sigh; he paused. At a couple of paces from him,

he perceived in the shadow a dark form. "Is that you, Cora?" Eusebius asked.

"Who other than Cora would be awake when you cannot sleep? The distance which divides her, does not prevent the heart which loves from hearing and counting the palpitations of the heart which is dear to her. Yours was full of fever, mine has caught its disorder, and sleep fled from my eyes as it fled from yours."

"Poor Cora! I was afraid you had returned to Weltevreden?"

"Cora is only a slave, and the roads are not open for such as her."

"Cora, the second mother of my son, has always been the friend of our home; and as I do not wish other bonds than that of affection to attach her to us, she is free."

"What use is there in snapping the slender thread of the cocoa-nut fibre when there still remains the heavy iron chain to imprison her feet? Cora will always be your slave, and the slave of one more powerful than you."

"Who is this other master, Cora?"

The negress hesitated for a few moments, and then said, "Destiny, which tells me to proceed, and compels me to go on, even though the fathomless eyes of death are on me—death, which, like a panther, lies in wait hidden in a thicket by the wayside."

Eusebius shrugged his shoulders. "You are about as sensible as you were yesterday?" he cried.

"I am ready to conduct you to the slopes of the Taïkoekoe," replied the young woman, as she rose to her feet and quitted the bamboo support against which she was reclining.

"Be it so; I will awaken the men who are to accompany us."

"No," replied Cora; "the spirit of the mountain is distrustful as well as jealous,—a man and woman alone will affront him less."

"As you please," said Eusebius, who thought he might

make this concession to the poor girl's superstitious feelings; "at least, let me order out a couple of horses."

"For what purpose? Swift as their feet may be, they cannot save us from danger if it should present itself; and they would be useless upon the slopes of the mountains. If the entreaties of my heart have not touched you—if the desire to possess these glittering stones enables you to contemn the dangers I have told you of, and the tears which flow from my eyes, take my hand, and let us set off." Eusebius seized the young negress's hand; it was dry and burning to the touch; a nervous trembling agitated her whole frame. "Come, then," he said, dragging Cora after him.

They proceeded in a southerly direction, leaving the gardens of Garoët to their left, passing through a plain planted with fruit-trees in full blossom, which perfumed the atmosphere with their sweet and penetrating odours. The night was calm and lovely, and the light of the stars alone diffused a tempered brightness all around. Whether influenced by the deep and solemn silence which the sound of their feet alone interrupted—whether excited by the perfumes with which the air was laden—or overcome by some new feeling—a metamorphosis took place in Cora's bearing and exterior, which, notwithstanding the pre-occupation of his mind, Eusebius could not fail to remark.

The farther they retired from Garoët, the more her terrors and apprehensions seemed to vanish. Far from lingering in her pace, it was she who preceded Eusebius, who chided him when he loitered on the way, by saying to him in a panting voice, and as if overcome by emotion, "Come, come!" Occasionally she took hold of her master's hand, and placed it against her bosom; it heaved beneath the tumultuous pulsations of her heart; and she bent towards Eusebius, and laid her head upon his breast. Eusebius had long since passed the line where honour and duty were contending against his deplorable avarice. If at this moment his reason had been free, there is little doubt he would have repressed the ardent manifestations

of Cora's regard ; but, like her, he had his fever—like her, his moments of delirium. The thirst for gold intoxicated his mind, and his own delirium could not dream of checking that of his companion ; he could think of nothing but the object for which she was acting as his guide ; and in the unrestrained exhibition of her regard he merely regretted the time she made them lose. They had been walking uninterruptedly for about an hour.

Gradually the last vestiges of cultivation disappeared ; the stunted shapes, the rounded tops of the orange, the mango, the citron, and the papaw trees were succeeded by the lofty and broad outlines with which the tamarinds, the liquid-ambers, the teak, and other forest-trees stood out against the starlit vault above them. The breeze had sprung up, and blew briskly through the thick covert of the cocoanut-trees and the flexible branches of the *arecas*,* which bowed gracefully, like immense plumes of feathers, as the two travellers passed on. Daybreak was not far distant. Eusebius and Cora entered the forest which clothes the base of Mount Taïkoekoe. Piled-up fragments of basalt, with lava, cinders, and scoria, covered the ground, and rendered their progress difficult. In the midst of an immense glade a rock of a pyramidal shape rose toweringly before them, hurled there probably by some violent eruption of the volcano.

Eusebius paused at the foot of this rock to await Cora, who for the first time had lingered behind ; he called to her, and he saw her run towards him. She held in her hand an enormous bouquet of gardenias and sprigs of the malatti, in which, notwithstanding the obscurity of the night, she skilfully mixed the white flowers of the one with the purple tubes of the other. "What are you doing ?" asked Eusebius.

"We cannot advance any farther until I have offered

* The *areca* or *arequier* is a kind of palm-tree, originally from America and the Indies. The fruit, also called areca, is an oviformed nut, which in India attains the size of a hen's egg. The pulp of its fruit enters into the composition of the kind of masticatory paste called *betel*.

a sacrifice to the Spirit of Fire, the master of this mountain."

"Do so, then, and do it as quickly as possible," said Eusebius, without taking the trouble to conceal his annoyance.

"Be kind and good, master," replied the negress, kneeling before Eusebius, and raising his hand to her lips; "the thick foliage of the trees above our heads increases the darkness of the night, and we cannot proceed much farther before day will dawn; permit your slave to render the spirit favourable to the object you have at heart; she is now as impatient as yourself to reach the spot where the dazzling stones may sparkle in your hand like waves of fire."

Eusebius, somewhat reassured by Cora's remark, sat down on the trunk of a fallen palm-tree. The young negress placed the crown which she had prepared on her head, retaining a large bouquet in her hand, gathered a quantity of dried twigs, and ascended the rock with surprising agility. Arrived at its summit, she set fire to the twigs, knelt down opposite to the volcano, and, with her face against the ground, implored the clemency of the spirit.

When her invocation was terminated she rose to her feet and threw upon the kindling fire a fresh handful of twigs. The flame, which was beginning to die out, burnt up again and illumined with its reddish light the features and dress of Cora, who was at that moment standing upon the top of the monolith. She had unfastened her tresses, and their dark mass floated wildly in the air; draped in the ample folds of her sarong, with its red stripes of the colour of blood, her lips trembling convulsively, her eyes gleaming, she took, one by one, the white flowers of the gardenia from the bouquet she held in her hand, and threw them into the fire, murmuring at the same time a kind of chant in slow and monotonous rhythm.

"Mighty Rakchasa," she said, "thou whose breath is a tempest and whose every sigh darts forth flames as high

as the clouds,—pure spirit, have pity on my tears ; if, unlike those which when thou groanest escape in floods from thy crater, they do not ravage the plain laden with desolation and death, they are not less bitter.

"Each tear I shed is like a drop of molten lead, and leaves, as it falls upon my heart, an incurable wound.

"I am the dove which lives a lonely and solitary life because its wings are black, and yet its kisses are sweet and the fluttering of its wings full of tender promises.

"But the flower which I offer thee is not fairer than the face of him I love so tenderly, and day does not ally itself with night.

"Thus it is that my eyelids remain ever open, my eyes know not how to renounce the happiness of gazing on his face, although his indifference is a deathblow to the mad hopes I have indulged.

"Pure spirit, mighty genius of the mountain, if our presence within thy empire offends thee, if a victim to thy wrath is needed, I offer thee my life, as I offer thee these flowers, shrivelled and blackened in the flames ; choose the dove with its dark wings, and let its beloved companion with the bright plumage, return to the banks of the broad lake where the fair companion of his choice awaits him."

The few brief words of Cora's invocation had struck Eusebius without exciting much attention ; but as he listened, he could not fail to be impressed by the touching character of the young negress's devotion.

The sombre majesty of the surrounding scenery, the accessories of the picture, the fantastic beauty of Cora herself, who, as the dying light of the fire shone upon her, seemed like a priestess of the night, the trembling tones of her voice heard amid the monotonous chant of her invocation,—everything, indeed, seemed to strike the imagination and soften the heart of Eusebius. For the first time since they had left Garoët, he forgot the rich treasure in search of which he had come so far, and remained breathless and divided between a vague feeling of terror and a new sentiment which he perceived gliding

into his heart, and which made him tremble from head to foot.

When she had finished her invocation, Cora took the wreath from her head and threw it into the fire, and then, leaning over the flame, seemed anxiously to watch it burning. Suddenly, and when the last sparks had shrivelled up the dark leaves of the malatti, she uttered a loud cry of joy, snatched the half-consumed crown from the burning embers and hurriedly descended from the rock.

"See! see!" she said to Eusebius, showing him the blackened branch; "look at this gardenia, which has escaped intact from the proof; see, the flame has respected it,—it is as white and pure as when my fingers cut it from its stem."—"Well?"

"It is a good omen; the spirit is in your favour; you will return safe and sound from your expedition."

"But you, Cora?" said Eusebius.

"I! what does that matter?" replied Cora, crumpling in her fingers the odoriferous tubes of the malatti, which was probably intended to represent herself in this ceremony, and which the fire had shrivelled, blackened, and reduced to cinders.

"No," exclaimed Eusebius; "far better to renounce these diamonds for ever, were they even as large and numerous as the mines of Vizapour, than sacrifice a hair of your head." At this passionate exclamation, which she had at last succeeded in drawing from Eusebius, Cora felt as if her senses were about to abandon her; she tottered as if bewildered, gazed all around with a wild stare; her utterance seemed impeded, and the tears which covered her face testified to her deep and lively emotion; she attempted to throw herself at her master's feet, but stooping down he held out his arms to raise her up; in this movement the tresses of the negress fell caressingly across his face; her timid cheeks touched his, and Eusebius felt a hot burning breath pass across his face. The dying gaze which Cora bent upon Eusebius's face fascinated him as the gaze of the serpent fascinates the bird it marks

for its prey. His excess of emotion, however, saved him; the sense of pleasure became almost one of pain, and aroused him by snatching him from the delirium which threatened to take possession of his senses. Filled with a terror he could not define, he abruptly repulsed the negress by unclasping the arms with which she clung round his neck.

For several minutes they remained opposite to each other,—Eusebius standing up, endeavouring to recover his self-possession, Cora extended on the ground, so completely prostrate that, but for the sighs and stifled groans which burst from her overwrought bosom, she would have seemed dead. Eusebius heard the murmur of a brook a few paces distant; he ran towards it, and plunged his head in its cool waters, and thus succeeded in clearing his brain from the blood which flowed to it; he breathed more freely; but when he recovered the full possession of his calmness of judgment, he felt no bitter or angry feeling against the slave.

"I am the veriest dolt living," he said in a low voice to himself: "I have nearly been made the dupe of this girl's piece of acting. The diamond mine was only a fable to find an opportunity of playing it suitably; still I cannot be angry with her; her affection is too sincere to reproach her harshly." Then turning towards Cora, he said, "Come, my good girl, get up, and let us try and return to Garoët before it is quite daylight."

"Return to Garoët! why?" asked the negress, in a kind of stupor.

"Because there is no use prolonging this jest."

"What jest do you mean, master?"

"The jest you have been playing me about these stones; but I forgive you, Cora; your affection is the only diamond you have to offer me; and you know I am prohibited accepting that, since I belong to Esther, and wish to preserve my faith for her intact." At Esther's name, Cora started suddenly to her feet; a complete revolution had taken place in her face, which, from the soft and tender expression it had previously

worn, became lowering and full of menace ; she drew a small silver-handled creese from her belt, and held it towards her master : "Plunge this into my heart," she said ; "better to feel its point in my heart than your words, which are colder and sharper than the steel. Why do you rob me of dreams which sweeten the last moments of the life of one who is advancing to certain death in serving as your guide to the riches of Mount Taïkoekoe ?"

"You lie !" cried Eusebius, in a voice which was harsher since he tried to stifle the suggestions of his avarice, which refused to admit that Cora had intended to deceive him. At this moment a loud roar like distant thunder was heard a great way off. Cora started ; her confidence seemed to have abandoned her ; her arms fell helplessly by her side, and her head sunk forward on her bosom. "You are right, master," she said in a voice which could hardly be heard ; "let us return to Garoët ; it must be so."

This resignation on the part of the young negress made a greater impression upon Eusebius than her preceding confident assertions had done ; for a moment his heart had again awakened to the whisperings of hope, and it was a bitter trial for him to see it vanish once more. "So," he said, in reproachful accents, "Cora has shamelessly abused the faith and confidence I had placed in her."

"Fly ! fly ! I implore you, master," replied the young woman, who appeared half dead with terror ; "fly without losing a moment." It was now no longer a loud though distant rumbling, but a terrible and deafening roar, which rent the air within a hundred paces from where the two travellers were standing, and precisely in the very direction whither Cora was endeavouring to drag her companion.

"A tiger !" said Eusebius, drawing his dagger from its sheath and seizing the slave by the hand.

"It is he ! it is he !" murmured Cora, in so low a voice that Eusebius was unable to catch what she said.

The beast's menacing and deafening roars subsided into a low, continuous, but still formidable growling, which approached nearer and nearer, and sounded as if the ferocious animal had advanced to the borders of the forest. Eusebius expected to see it burst forth from the dense plantation which skirted the wood, and bound into the open ground. "Place yourself behind me, Cora," he said to his companion.

"No, no!" returned the negress, who seemed to have been inspired by the imminence of the danger with redoubled energy; "the spirit of the mountain is on our side, and we have nothing to fear from wild beasts. Look, look, master!" And she pointed with her finger to a phosphorescent flame which flitted about in the direction of the mountain, at one moment creeping along the ground, at another springing up to the height of the summit of the loftiest palm-trees.

"But whither are you going, Cora?"

"To the Taïkoekoe. Before the sun shall have completed half its course, you shall plunge your hand in the basin which holds the marvellous riches I have told you about. I have spoken truly, master; I swear it, by the love which fills my heart. Come on, since *he* requires, since *he* wills it." Although these last words were utterly incomprehensible to him, Eusebius did not hesitate a moment, but followed Cora, who, keeping steadily in view the restless light she had pointed out to her master, began the ascent of the lower slopes of the Taïkoekoe, and forced their way through the creepers which made the forest an almost impenetrable mass of foliage.

CHAPTER XXV.

Soon Eusebius and Cora quitted the region of the huge forest trees, and entered a district where the soil, impoverished by the cinders and lava with which the surface was covered, afforded a bare nourishment to a few stunted mimosas and dwarf palms. At the approach of daylight the stars had disappeared; the night had become still darker than ever; and the young girl continued to follow the flickering movements which the will-o'-the wisp traced capriciously before her and her companion. Eusebius hazarded a few remarks; but although her whole body trembled as if she were still under the influence of her recent emotions, Cora so confidently insisted that they would be wrong to deviate from the path which the light indicated, and which, she asserted, had been sent by Rakchasa himself, that her master, who perceived that their progress continued upwards and that it led them away from the direction of the tiger, did not attempt another observation.

Gradually they left the mimosas behind them; the ground over which they passed became more and more difficult to walk upon; at one time they were obliged to climb over huge boulders of cooled lava or basalt, which lay scattered over the ground like enormous dolmens;* at another they fell up to their knees in the fine cinders which covered the earth several feet deep.

"From what you have said, Cora," observed Eusebius, "I believe we are losing our time in ascending these steeps; the perpendicular rock and the mountain-stream

* A *dolmen* is a kind of Druidical monument, formed of one large flat stone resting upon two perpendicular stones. *Dolmens* are supposed to indicate the tombs of warriors, or to have been used as sacrificial altars.

ought to be more to the right, upon that side of the Taïkoekoe which faces its neighbour, the Papandazan."

The only reply Cora made, was to point to the pale flame, which continued to flit along the mass of scoriæ. As Eusebius examined the dark mass of the mountain which rose in front of them, he thought it possible they might not have ascended more than two-thirds of the height, and that the negress might still be right, after all. "I think," he said, "it would be better to wait here until it becomes lighter; I have more confidence in your recollection than in the friendly disposition which Rakchasa manifests in me." Just as he finished this remark, Eusebius felt his feet impeded by something which had made him stumble; he put his hand down to ascertain what it was, and uttered a cry of terror, as he discovered in the obstacle the remains of a human skeleton. At his exclamation, a similar cry escaped Cora's lips; for, on her side, the negress almost fainted as she felt borne down by a powerful blast of warm air. At the same moment an acrid and fetid odour seemed to penetrate the brains of the two travellers and turn them giddy. Eusebius did not immediately take particular notice of what was passing around them; but Cora, who had been brought up in that country, cried out, "We are lost,—lost without resource,—the spirit of the mountain has drawn us into the Guevo-upas."

"The Guevo-upas,—what is that?" asked Eusebius.

"The terrible valley, which none who have once entered can ever leave. Look around you; see, the ground is white with the bones of those who have come hither and found their death."

"That is a mere fable," returned Eusebius; "the Bohun-upas slays not those who sleep under its shade; its poison is only terrible when introduced into the veins."

"Who spoke of the Bohun-upas?" said Cora, impatiently; "I tell you we are in the Guevo-upas,—in the valley of poison and death. It is not the shade of the accursed tree which will kill us, but the fumes which escape from the ground, and which Rakchasa sends to

stifle his enemies." Eusebius felt that the negress spoke truly; they were near one of those solfataras, or semi-extinct volcanoes, from which the fumes of carbonic acid gas escaping into the atmosphere, asphyxiate all living creatures who venture within its poisoned circle. At every step he took upon this cursed ground, he stumbled over a carcass, either of man or animal. He heard,—he felt even the dry bones crumbling under his feet; a cold sweat bathed his forehead, and his heart beat as if it would burst. Cora ran wildly in different directions, bent upon seeking some way of escape—some means of safety. "The Rakchasa has leagued himself with the Barkasahan; a spirit of fire has submitted to the directions of one who, like the loathsome worm, finds in the grave the nourishment to perpetuate its own existence. And yet the accursed Barkasahan himself swore to me that he would be satisfied with one victim. If thou hast deceived me, after I implored thee on my knees to preserve the life of one dearer to me than my own existence, I curse thee, Basilius."

This name drew Eusebius from the helpless state into which, whether from terror or owing to the influence of the deleterious gas, he was fast sinking. He bounded towards Cora, and seized hold of her by the arm, just as she had begun to climb up an enormous block of basalt commanding a view of this ominous plain. "Woman," he cried, "answer me as you would answer the god in whom you believe,—what was the name you pronounced just now?"

"Pardon, pardon!" replied Cora, embracing her master's knees.

"Ah! I understand all now; I see the infernal trap I have been led into. You, whom I thought good, kind, devoted,—you, whose passion found, if not an echo, at least pity in my heart,—you, who like the wretched Rangoun at Meester Cornelis, have been urged on by him to my destruction;—woman or phantom, return to him who inspired you to act so shameless a comedy; tell him that

I defy his efforts and his wrath; that Esther is still the one who possesses my entire affection; that, far from having obtained from Eusebius a single word of tenderness or compassion, you have received nothing but outrages from him;—that he would not wait until the poisons of the Guevo-upas had released you from your miserable existence;—that he smote you with his dagger, and that you carry with you nothing but his malediction and his hate." With these words Eusebius smote the negress so violent a blow with the creese which he held in his hand, that poor Cora fell upon the rock, and glided from it down the steep descent which it formed upon the side opposite to that by which she, as well as Eusebius, had ascended. The latter heard the poor girl's body rolling down the declivity, carrying the stones in her course; next, a last adieu of love, which the negress called out to him, and then, everything again was still.

However just his vengeance seemed to him,—however deep and determined was the feeling of hatred which the name of his persecutor had aroused, Eusebius's heart was filled with remorse as soon as the crime was committed. He threw away the blood-stained weapon, and, forgetful of his causes of complaint against Cora and of his own position, he began bitterly to bewail the fate of the young negress. The distress he suffered recalled him to himself; his breathing became more difficult, and his brain grew every moment more confused; he felt as if a thousand sparks of fire were traversing his frame in a thousand directions. He tried to walk, but his limbs sank under him; he staggered like a drunken man, and every movement he made seemed to pierce his brain and caused him inconceivable agony. He felt that expiation would follow his crime very speedily, and he sat down upon the block of basalt to await death.

The plain stretched out far and wide; he heard the murmur of the breeze as it passed over the forests; he saw the dark shadows which separated him from the horizon chequered with the lights of the distant village; one of them, perhaps, was burning by the bed-

side where Esther was sleeping, while he was dying far from her. He endeavoured to concentrate his thoughts upon the wife of his love, and to drive away the feelings of regret of that wealth which was his no longer, but which threw a gloom over his last moments. Soon his head became faint and giddy, and his name, pronounced aloud, only reached his ear like a vague, confused sound. The cool sea-breeze, however, as it swept across his brow, restored him somewhat to his senses; it seemed as if the voice was Cora's voice, and that, from the bottom of the gulf where she had fallen, the negress spoke to him of safety. This word awoke in him that feeling of self-preservation so difficult wholly to extinguish; he tried to rise to his feet, but his paralyzed limbs refused him their support.

The appeals redoubled; the voice of Cora implored Eusebius to come to her, in the name of everything he held most dear in this life, in the name of his wife and child. A sudden thought occurred to Eusebius amid the gloom and desolation which beset him; he threw himself upon his back, and abandoned himself to his own weight upon the brink of the precipice. But this last effort absorbed all his remaining energy, and when he felt the points of the rocks upon which he was rolling pierce his body, he fainted.

This swoon lasted but a few moments; a sensation of comfort and coolness restored him to his senses; he opened his eyes, and found himself lying across a little stream which wound along the base of the precipice, his head resting upon Cora's knees, while she, leaning against the side of the rock, seemed almost at the point of death.

"Saved, saved!" said the negress, clasping her hands together. "Forgive me, Rakchasa, for having doubted the truth of your omen."

"Yes, saved," Eusebius answered, "and saved by her whose life I wished to take; for it was your voice, Cora, that inspired me with the determination to descend into this gulf, which is sheltered from the deadly vapours of the volcano. My gratitude, Cora, will be eternal."

"So much the better; death will be sweet now that I know I shall not carry away your curses with me to the tomb."

"Death, do you say! no, no, Cora; you will live, since my blow did not prove immediately fatal."

"No," replied Cora; "in a few moments I shall have returned to him who opens his arms to all, without distinction of colour or race. Your kindness is useless, but I bless you for the feeling of pity which has succeeded your anger, and which will soften my last moments. Perhaps the compassion you have shown will not be long without its reward."

"How do you mean?"

"The Rakchasa is just—the Rakchasa is great; the mighty genius of the mountain cannot have formed an alliance with the foul and loathsome Barkasahan."

"Again I ask you what you mean."

"The Rakchasa never jests with those who pray unto him with a fervent heart."

"I cannot understand you, Cora."

"He must have conducted us to the spot where you wished to go. I offered him my life if he would permit you to procure from the bowels of the mountain the precious stones you wished for. I shall die shortly, and the Rakchasa will have kept his faith. We cannot be far from the spot where the pebbles which will make you happy lie sleeping under the waters."

"Unhappy creature! again these diamonds! We are in a gulf without an outlet, and unless we succeed in again ascending the steep incline of the Guevo-upas, unless we once more attempt to cross its poisoned plain, who knows if we shall ever quit this place? Rouse yourself, Cora, and cease to trifle with my credulity by still talking of those fabulous jewels."

"Cora has not been trifling with your credulity, master; with death close at hand, she swears it. She did wrong in obeying the Barkasahan by becoming an inmate of your home to serve his hatred; but no sooner did my look meet yours, than I experienced, in real but bitter

truth, the love he desired me to feign; I felt that my heart had found its conqueror. It is as true, master, as when, lying at my dead mother's feet, my eyes saw in heaps the stones you say are so precious."

"It is delirium," cried Eusebius, in bewilderment,—"it is delirium which makes her speak as she does. Yet, can it be true what she says?"

"It seems as if my memory had already once before seen this horrible spot. Ah! if my strength had not abandoned me, I could guide you, though the night is still dark, safely through this labyrinth, and could lead you to the coveted treasure."

"No, you must not stir; every effort you make would exhaust your strength and accelerate the moment of—— Oh! why," he cried, in accents of bitter self-reproach, "why did I yield to my anger? why did I strike you? Cora, Cora, I can walk; speak, tell me in which direction I ought to go." And then, to revive Cora, whose respiration was hardly perceptible, Eusebius dipped his handkerchief in the stream and bathed her face; and then drawing her closer to him, he laid her head upon his breast. "Cora, Cora, try and collect your thoughts. If I possessed the riches you speak of, I could defy Basilius. Cora, in which direction must I bend my steps?"

"Ah!" said the negress, without answering Eusebius, and as if absorbed by a new sensation of happiness, "love is stronger than matter—affection triumphs over death. Now that I feel you near me, my blood seems to have recovered something of its warmth, and to circulate with fresh vigour in my veins. Do not stir, master; do not stir. Who in earth or heaven could be offended with those innocent caresses, which the hand of the angel of death will soon check for ever?" And then, after a moment's silence, she continued: "You spoke to me of Heaven just now; I have no other god but you, you whom I have loved so much; you have been my day and my night; and when your smile came to dry my tears, I was

as happy as those who dwell in the paradise promised to the elect."

"Have you forgiven me, master?" she resumed, after a pause.

"Yes, Cora, yes; but could you not collect your thoughts sufficiently to tell me in what direction I ought to begin my search?"

"Do you now believe that I have not told you a falsehood?"

"The treasure exists; but the moments are precious! You must give me some indication to enable me, not only to find it, but also to escape from this precipice, which is probably only one of the craters of the volcano. If you do indeed love me, Cora, you will speak. A few minutes will suffice to make us rich and powerful for ever. I will then carry you away in my arms. Knowledge and skill belong to those who can afford to buy them. I will pay so heavily that they shall avert from your head the death which menaces you; you will live for many long days happily beside me. Tell me, would you not like it?"

"And am I not happy now?" replied the negress, who, as she listened to Eusebius, seemed to have fallen into a kind of ecstasy. "Your voice is like the music of heavenly spirits coming to meet me; your heart, which I feel beating against my own, makes my whole being tremble with happiness. Ah! whether this be death or life, I am happy as I am, and ask no happiness beyond it."

"Cora, Cora, speak to me about the treasure."

"Love is the real treasure; it is the only one which we carry away with us to the grave,—the only one which hides the face of death beneath roses."

"Oh! heavens! she will die without telling me what I want to know."

"Yes," continued the negress, with an increasing exaltation, "love makes us immortal; I feel it in the transports which fill my whole frame, in the happiness which inspires my heart and soul. When your feet shall tread

the earthly bed in which I shall be sleeping, I shall awake from my death-sleep tremblingly."

Eusebius's brain grew giddy and confused, a kind of delirium again took possession of it, disturbed already by the various shocks it had received during the last few hours. At Cora's last words his cupidity had been again awakened, more eager and determined than ever; all further doubt vanished; a kind of intuition told him that the treasure was but a few paces from where they were; he felt that it was so, he almost saw it, and it seemed as if one word from Cora could place it within his grasp. His impatience to render himself master of it deprived him of all reflection; he was seized with a wild feeling of rage against the negress, against death itself, when he thought that although so close to the object of his desire, it might escape him, after all. He threw himself on his knees before the negress; he held her head between his hands, their faces almost touching. "Cora, Cora," he cried, "I adjure you to answer me,—where is the little stream you spoke of?—where are the diamonds?"

"Yes," replied Cora, "you are better as you are; you are nearer to me, and your lips can receive the last sigh of one who loved you much."

"And what do I care for your love? It is not that I want. Answer me, answer me."

"Forgive me, master; but there is a cloud floating before my eyes, and in this cloud I still see your loved face accompanying me in the happy regions whither I am going."

Eusebius saw it was hopeless to expect anything more from the dying woman. As he tore himself from her side, her head fell back against the rock with a dull heavy sound. He then seated himself upon one of the large stones of the stream, casting a vague uneasy glance around him. This little stream flowed, as we have already observed, at the bottom of a precipice, between two immense walls of rock, which seemed to have been rent asunder by some terrible convulsion of the mountain. About a hundred

paces from where he stood, one of these granite walls again joined the mountain to which it belonged ; the other, rearing its lofty summit with sharpened peak towards the heavens, shelved downwards, and was soon lost in the shadows of the plain. Owing to the obscurity, Eusebius had been unable until that moment to observe that the precipice terminated at that distance. Between the two black lines of the gigantic rocks, through the opening they thus formed, he now perceived a bright line of light, from which issued rays of rose-coloured flame, which, expanding like a sheaf, illumined the deep blue of the horizon. It was the rising sun. He heard the noise of the torrent falling in cascades at the extremity of the ravine. It was the precipice. He ran to this crevice, and at twenty feet below him perceived the little plateau which Cora had so accurately described, and upon this plateau the basin which the torrent had hollowed out as it dashed unceasingly upon the rock. "The stream where the diamonds are!" he exclaimed.

At the same moment a pale ray of the rising sun, gliding between the sides of the two mountains, rested upon the water which foamed at his feet, and under its crystal surface a thousand brilliant facets reflected the ray of fire. Eusebius's emotion was such that his knees trembled as if he were going to fall. But the sight of the treasure which every moment revealed to him more distinctly, restored him to his senses, and he threw himself upon the precious stones, as if he feared they would still escape him.

He continued his rich harvest for several minutes, unable to restrain loud exclamations of delight at every fresh diamond which he added to those which his hands already contained. A dark mass which barred the bed of the little torrent, checked him ; he raised his eyes and recognized Cora. The negress was as still and motionless as death ; her head was leaning upon the stone against which Eusebius had let it fall, and her white lips were partially opened. As he threw a look of compassion upon her, his eyes suddenly met those of the young

negress. In spite of fast-approaching dissolution, they seemed to follow his own. He again observed in those moistened orbs the same expression of impassioned anguor which he had remarked so frequently before. Amid the corpse-like rigidity of the rest of the face, the negress's gaze still retained life and animation; it almost spoke to him in language that betrayed her deep affection. Eusebius tried to turn away his head; but some superhuman power seemed to force him to contemplate her; and again, too, in his own despite, he felt her look incorporate with his own being, and stir his pulse with the same passion it expressed.

His heart, softened by his unbounded happiness at the precious discovery he had made, seemed to melt with feelings of the tenderest pity and profoundest compassion for his unhappy victim. He let the diamonds, with which his hands were full, drop to the ground.

"Cora," he cried, throwing himself at her feet, "it is for me, Cora, to ask your forgiveness now. If you have spoken truly, Cora,—if love does indeed survive the destruction of our earthly frame,—assure me by a sign that you carry away neither hatred nor malice against me." And then, more and more subjected by the influence of the singular gaze the negress still bent upon him, he continued: "But no, no, you cannot be dead; your beautiful form, your loving heart, cannot have become separated from each other. Oh! speak to me, or look not at me as you now look, Cora." And the wretched Eusebius raised the body of the slave in his arms, and tried to warm her against his own breast. "Great heavens! when I think that a few moments since, I still heard your voice; why did I leave you? So long as I remained near you, your spirit would never have hurried away." And then, in despairing accents he added: "Cora, do not leave me to the remorse of having deprived you of life; live, Cora—live to hear me say *I love you.*"

Eusebius had scarcely pronounced these last words when he heard a loud peal of laughter just above his head. He had heard a similar burst of laughter in circumstances

that had been so fraught with calamity for him, that he recognized the person from whose lips the laugh had proceeded, even before he raised his eyes and perceived Noungal, dressed precisely as on that day when he had spoken to him at the mouth of the Tjiliwong, in the costume of a Malay pirate. "You—you again!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," replied the other; "I need no assurance but my own to satisfy me that I am gradually recovering my property. This time, Eusebius Van den Beck, you will not need much entreaty, I hope, to comply with the wishes of your dear uncle Basilius; otherwise I shall be compelled to speak. If I am to credit what is indicated by this poniard, which I found on the borders of the Guevo-upas, there has been murder committed, and that might cost you something more than six hundred thousand florins." Eusebius did not stay to listen to another word: half mad with terror, he ran towards the opening of the precipice, leaped upon the terrace where poor Cora's mother had met with so terrible a death, and fled at the top of his speed into the plain, without noticing that in the negress's hand, which had so tightly clasped his own, he had left his little silver ring, the fellow of that which his wife wore, and which the latter had one day displayed to the notary Maës with so much pride.

CHAPTER XXVI.

We left Argalenka in the hands of Thsermai's servants, who were considerably embarrassed how to execute the orders they had received from their master. Ever since the latter had lost the title of Regent of the province of Bantam, those rooms in the palace which had been used as prison cells had been dedicated to other purposes; not one was in a state to receive so unimportant a guest. As they crossed the principal courtyard, they

paused to deliberate upon what was to be done. One of their number suggested that there were a couple of places opposite to them, which would answer the very purpose. In fact, in this courtyard there were a couple of iron dens or cages, one of which served as a lodging for Maha, and the other Thsermaï had used for a long time as a den for a favourite tiger. The tiger having thought fit, a short time before, to die of consumption, they determined to give his place to Argalenka, the servants, of course, not failing to tell the poor devil of the honour they were conferring upon him. They thrust him through the narrow opening; he allowed them to bar him in without a murmur, and threw himself upon the wooden flooring of the den—a flooring which still retained that strong fetid odour peculiar to wild beasts. He did not shed a tear, nor utter a single complaint; his eyes remained fixed and unnaturally open; it seemed as if from this inert mass grief had removed the living principle, and merely left the bare existence behind it. He passed the whole night without a moment's rest or sleep.

Towards the middle of the following day, one of the men belonging to the palace thrust through the iron bars of the cage a cake made of rice and a jug of water. Argalenka did not move his head, nor touch the food. The servants passed to and fro through the courtyard without paying the slightest attention to the prisoner. On the third evening, however, when the labours of the day were over, one of them stopped before the den, and observed that the three rice-cakes and the three flagons of water, which had been placed beside Argalenka during the three previous days, had not been touched. "Beduin," said the man, "are you ill?—why have you not touched your food?" Argalenka did not reply. "By Allah! I think he is dead," continued the servant, turning to one of his comrades, who had just joined him.

"No, the dog still breathes—I saw his eyelids move when you spoke to him; but if he persists in his resolution, Dagon will soon be released from the trouble of bringing him his food."

"Poor devil!—they say he is the father of Arroa. While the girl rules the son of the Sansonams of Bantam, the father is dying of hunger in a corner of his daughter's palace."

"It was written."

"Suppose we told the master?"

"I shall take good care not to risk my Mussulman's skin to save this infidel's carcass. Did you not hear the noise in the dalam to-day?"

"No, I took the master's herds to graze upon the pastures of Mount Gagak."

"The Malay has arrived."——"The Malay?"

"Yes; that dark swarthy-faced man, whom not a soul among us knows anything about, and in whose presence, the master, who is so insolent and haughty to everybody else, trembles and gives way like a child."

"What happened?"

"No one but that wretch of a Gueber could tell you, for he was the only person present at the interview. All I know is, that when the Malay left, the adipati was just as if all the furies of Eblis had taken possession of him; and I would as soon think of meeting the burning lava of the Panderango, as the anger of Thsermaï at this moment. Listen, don't you hear him blaspheming the name of Allah?" In fact, the deep and menacing growls of a wild beast, and cries of rage and imprecations of a human being, were heard from the apartments which Thsermaï usually occupied.

Soon the bamboo blind which formed one of the doors was dashed to pieces, and Maha, the black panther of the Javanese prince, darted through the breach she had just made. The animal seemed in a state of the wildest passion, and at the same time cowed by terror. It tore twice round the courtyard, bounding into the very midst of the terrified servants, and then, finding the door of its old cage open, it darted into it, and crouched down in the darkest corner, its hair standing on end, its whiskers drawn back, and opening and shutting, with an expression of rage and fear, its large topaz-like eyes, giving vent

at the same time to a menacing growl. The Javanese prince followed it almost immediately, his face bearing the traces of a severe struggle. The panther's five talons had made five distinct wounds in Thsermaï's cheek; a stream of blood flowed down his naked breast, stopped only by the folds of his sarong, which was fastened round his waist.

As soon as Maha perceived him, she drew back as if about to prepare to spring upon her master. Her eyes dilated and flashed like lightning, her tail beat the flooring of the den with a feverish impatience, like the flail of the thresher whirling through the air, and her growls occasionally burst into a loud roar. Thsermaï, who had a whip of rhinoceros-hide in his hand, was on the point of entering the den; but, looking at the panther, drew back in alarm. "A gun, a gun!" he cried in a hoarse voice; "will you let me be strangled by this wild beast, cursed dogs that you are!—a gun to kill it with."

One of his servants ran into the palace, and returned with one of those beautiful weapons, inlayed and enamelled with mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell, and coral. He handed it to the son of the Sansonams, who, without even ascertaining if it were loaded, seized it with an eagerness full of rage, and took aim at the panther. But at the very moment he placed his finger upon the trigger, a man, who had with great difficulty made his way through the thronging ranks of attendants and slaves, in order to reach the prince, suddenly threw up the barrel, and the ball, instead of hitting Maha, was lost among the branches of the trees which surrounded the palace.

Thsermaï, who was beside himself with passion, seeing that the panther had escaped him, threw aside his gun, seized his whip again, and after he had made it whistle through the air, struck the man across the face. The terrible thong left a blue and blood-stained wheal along his flesh; and it was only then that Thsermaï recognized who it was that had dared to interpose between his anger and

the animal who was the object of it. "Hurruck!" he exclaimed.

It was in fact Hurruck, still clothed in his rags, which he displayed as proudly amidst the magnificent costumes by which he was surrounded, as he had done in the mixed society at Meester Cornelis's. He remained calm and unmoved under the blow he had just received, and, but for the mark of which his cheek bore such evidence, one would have thought that the Javanese had struck a statue of bronze. "In what way has Maha incurred her master's anger?" he asked coldly.

Thsermaï pointed to the wound on his own face; and then, as if he had blushed to descend to an explanation in the presence of his crowd of attendants, "What does that matter to you," he answered; "does not Maha belong to me? When you brought it to me, Gueber, did I not faithfully pay you the price agreed upon? I paid for the right to kill it, and die it shall. The Dutch, our much-loved lords and masters, have not, that I am aware of, extended to the panthers in the island the benefits of their laws against slavery; and we are not forbidden to dispose of the existence of a beast, although we are prevented from taking the lives of creatures such as these."

"You remind me of the money payment I received, Thsermaï; but have you ever thought of the fatigue and danger I underwent to gain it? Listen. Do you know, that to find that beast, I wandered seven days through the forest of Gidadal, which the boldest hunter never enters without trembling,—where every thicket which rustles against your clothes as you pass by, every creeper which waves above your head, every trunk of a tree which is only dimly seen in the dark shades of the forest, every dried leaf under your feet, may be something ready to dart forth or crawl or spring out upon you, something which growls or hisses or roars at you, something which has a thousand names, and which for the solitary traveller, as I was then, has only one—Death!

Do you know, that from the moment the *ravenala** opens its kindly cups to the thirsty traveller until it closes them again, I have remained crouched upon a branch, barely hidden behind the trunk of an adjoining tree, watching the moment the dam should quit its den; that during those six mortal hours I was at the mercy of the terrible beast; that if the wind had but changed, if it had carried the emanations of the panther's enemy into the animal's den, neither my creese nor *your* courage, which you cannot question, Thsermaï, would have saved Hurruck? And when he at last entered into the lair, where at every step he took the bones rattled under his feet, when having placed the three little panthers in one of the folds of his sarong, he took flight like a robber, he had not been gone half an hour when he heard a fearful sound behind him. It was not the cries of the lions hungering for their prey; it was not the deep roar of the tiger interrupted in his love-sick fancies;—the distant thunder grew more fearful still, its bursts resounded through the echoing vaults of the Gidadal. It was the savage plaint, the wild lamentations of the mother, the voice that cried to the echoes: 'Woe to him who has taken my little ones!' The wildest terror seemed to infect every living creature in the forest. The deer, the fawns, the wild boars, the gazelles, forgot the fear which the presence of man inspires; they bounded past me; the serpents glided along beneath the moss; the very birds hid themselves amid the leaves of the trees, as if even they trembled with affright. Panting, and breathless, I still fled on. Soon all the inhabitants of the woods disappeared; I was alone, and the roaring approached nearer and nearer still. Ah! Thsermaï, I remember it as distinctly as though it were but yesterday; and when I think of it, I still feel my hair stand on end—behind me the branches snapping and breaking as if a herd of wild buffaloes were plunging through the thickets;

* *Ravenala*, a tree which grows at Madagascar and other parts of the East in marshy localities, attaining a great height. Their large leaves, when pierced at the base, afford a kind of water fit to drink, and hence is known as the Traveller's tree.

sheer terror had frozen the blood in my veins; a red cloud seemed to veil my gaze; I went on stumbling and staggering like a drunken man; I seemed to feel the hot breath of the tremendous beast upon my neck; instinctively I drew my creese from its sheath, and then, unwilling to die until I had slaked my vengeance, I took hold of one of the cubs, and was about to dash out its brains against the nearest tree; the little thing uttered a faint wailing cry of pain, to which the mother responded by a roar that made every muscle in my body vibrate like the cords of a guitar in the hands of a bedaya; my fingers were unclasped, and the little panther fell among the high grass! Ormuzd had just saved one of his children from death, blessed be his name; for instead of springing upon me, the panther picked up her cub, and, mother still in her rage, she wished to place it in safety before wresting the two others from their ravisher. I darted through the forest, and madly continued my onward course; but the keen scent of the animal guided her with more certainty upon my track than the piercing eye of the hunter can follow the flight of the stag. It was not long before she resumed her pursuit; and once more I was obliged to sacrifice another of my prey; and, had not the river Gilisvang happened to lie in my path, had I not been able, by darting into the stream, to mislead the sagacity of the mother, the abandonment of Maha, the last of her little ones, would not perhaps have saved me from her wrath. And now, Thsermaï, do you think that the few pieces of gold which you threw to me have paid me for the trouble and risks I ran, and that I have not withal preserved the right to say to you: 'Do not kill the poor animal whose capture almost cost me my life?'"

"If the sum I gave you was not sufficient, fix yourself the price you want; the son of the Sonsonams does not wish to remain any man's debtor."

"I ask you for Maha's life."——"No."

"Thsermaï, you have struck me in the face—I who am not one of your trembling and cowardly Javanese—I

who am a free son of Ormuzd; forgive Maha and I will forget it." Thsermaï looked at the Gueber with a contemptuous air, which could hardly have escaped the latter. "No," he replied, "Maha has made her master's blood flow—Maha must die; and she *shall* die, I swear by the holy tomb at Mecca—I swear it."

"Maha scratched your face while playing, Thsermaï," said the serpent-charmer, lowering his voice. "Reserve your courage for one who has been pleased to foster in your heart a wound far deeper than that with which Maha has scarred your cheek."

Thsermaï's eyebrows knitted in anxious thought, and suddenly dismissing his attendants with a gesture, he said, "You mean Noungal. True, he has returned to-day, as he announced a month ago; he has returned more arrogant and more menacing than ever. In vain did I offer him all that remained to me of the treasures of the Sonsonams, my ancestors—in vain did I throw myself on my knees imploringly before him. He laughed at my despair; he disdained my offers; he persists in his demand of the flower of my harem—the beautiful girl with the black eyes."

"And Thsermaï, the faithful observer of sworn faith, will do what Noungal asks: he will separate himself from the pearl of Hindostan."——"Perhaps so," said the Javanese prince, who seemed to reflect.

"Hurruck," he resumed, after the pause of a few moments, "you told me that he whom they call Noungal, and who is now the ruler of the sea-pirates, was a Barka-sahan—one of those impure spirits who, with the aid of the foul fiend himself, has robbed the ruler of the heavens of a ray of his glorious power—one of those vampires who, by sucking the blood of their victims, procure the eternity of an existence which they devote to evil practices; but at the same time you told me that strength united to cunning could succeed in overthrowing this cursed Barka-sahan. Hurruck, will you help me in this task?"

"You hate Noungal; you are afraid of him; you are not strength."

"No, I fear him not; he threatened me; and you see. he has gone away with empty hands."

"What does Noungal care for that. To-day you said to him 'no'; to-morrow you will implore him to accept that which you refuse him to-day. The master of the sea-pirates has time in his favour, and does not resemble the *salangane*,* which has only a brief season to devote to his loving fancies.

Thsermaï's face turned livid with rage. "Never," he cried; "far sooner would I prefer to see Arroa dead, or expiring at my feet, than to know her to be in the power of the Barkasahan." At this name of Arroa a faint noise was heard in the den next to that in which the panther was crouching; it was Argalenka, who raised his head, heavy with approaching death.

"Be on my side, Hurruck," continued the Javanese prince, "and we will hurl Noungal back among the foul spirits he belongs to; and I will make you so rich and powerful, that the wealthiest and noblest of our Javanese shall envy your happiness."

The Gueber smiled in a strange manner as he replied, with raillery in his voice, "No, I will not attack Noungal. The chief of the Bohemians of the sea is mighty, both in this world and in the next. Hurruck is a poor worm in the grass, and the Barkasahan has merely to put out his foot to crush him."

"We shall triumph over him, I tell you."

"Bah! Orumzd has blinded Thsermaï."

"How mean you?"

"Because Thsermaï, at the very moment of engaging in the contest, is ready to cast into that gulf which never restores its prey, the only weapon which can secure him the victory."

"I do not understand you."

"Have you not sworn that this day shall be the last

* The *Salangane* is a kind of swallow common in China and the isles of the Indian Ocean; its nest is formed of a gelatinous substance procured from sea-weed, and is regarded as a great luxury by the Chinese.

poor Maha shall ever see?" continued the Gueber, pointing to the panther.

"Yes, and it shall be."

"That black beast can alone prevail against the son of darkness. In vain for you to plunge your creese into the heart of a Barkasahan—in vain to pour into his veins the juice of the bohun-upas of our island—in vain to hurl upon his body the rocks of our mountains—in vain to hide his corpse in the bowels of the earth: your bright blade would be blunted—the poison would lose its virtue—the giant rocks would return to their places of their own accord—the earth would reject the corpse you had confided to it, as the yawning mouths of the Panderango reject the burning lava which obstructs its crater. Here, here," continued the Gueber, as he caressed the ebony sides of the panther, which, as if she understood he was speaking of her, was rubbing her head against the hand which Hurruck had passed between the bars—"here only is the sepulchre which Orumzd has assigned to those cursed beings who desolate the world so long as the wrath of the offended Majesty on high endures."

"Thanks, thanks, Hurruck," replied Thsermaï, as a furious burst of joy suddenly illumined his face. "If Mahomet pleases, Arroa shall not change masters. Keep Maha carefully where she is. I will get my arms; saddle my horses, and we will follow the traces of Noungal with the living tomb in which he shall be buried."

"And your oaths?" Thsermaï shrugged his shoulders as he re-entered the palace. Hurruck looked at his retreating figure, and then, turning round, he opened the iron door of the den and uttered a low cry. Maha obeyed the sound like a dog obeys its master's whistle; supple as a snake it glided to the ground, and began to rub itself against the Gueber's legs, arching its back like a young cat. "The secret will not be of much service to you," he murmured: "when you are ready to begin the chase, your hound will be far away; here is your gold, I resume my prize. Here, Maha!" With these words he threw

some pieces of money into the den, and was moving away, followed by the panther who kept close to his side, when he heard some one call him by name.

It was Argalenka, who had dragged himself along his prison floor and leaned against the bars. "Brother, brother," said the old man, "has suffering made my mind wander? did I dream just now when I fancied I heard the name of death and Arroa pronounced together? A danger menaces her! Oh! now I wish to live! I am weak, powerless,—but you are strong and vigorous; defend her, I implore you,—save Arroa, and I will become your slave."

"We have both followed different ways, Argalenka. I have been working at my bloody task, you have awaited in suffering and resignation, and Ormuzd has led us both to the end we wished to attain; the day of vengeance, for which I have been longing, is at hand, and soon you will again receive the caresses of your child."

"My girl, my girl!"

"You shall see her again this very night."

"You are trifling with my affection; do not speak in that way, Hurruck; my poor head, weakened by long fasting, seems as if it would burst. How know you that Arroa's lips will so soon be pressed against her old father's?"

"He who knows how to listen knows how to learn. The little scorpion hidden under the gilded panellings of the palace overhears the secrets of the sultan."

"But she loves me not now; she did not even recognize him who brought her into being."

"What matters that to you? If she only seems to love you, if she only pretends to recognize you, even though the mere appearance of happiness should be all you get, learn to be content with that which Ormuzd sends you; embrace the dream without troubling yourself whether it be a reality or not."

"Oh, my child, my poor child! why has Buddha abandoned us to the spirits of darkness?"

"Try and gain some strength from the food beside

you ; you will need it, for you must be up and away to-night, and the road will be a long one."

"And my daughter too?"

"Your daughter too ; before the moon will have risen as high as the trees which surround this palace, she will be in your arms."

"How can I thank you, Hurruck, for restoring me my child?"

"Alas!" said the Gueber in a tone of pity, "it is not I who will restore your child to you."

"But tell me his name that I may throw myself at his knees and adore him as a living emanation of Buddha."

"If I were to name him, your heart would shudder with horror rather than be inspired with gratitude ; for it is the very man towards whom every sigh which escapes your breast is laden with a curse."

"You are mistaken, Gueber ; I curse no one, not even the man whose witchcraft has made a foul and detestable creature of my child,—Buddha alone has the right to curse."

"What good then in telling you his name?" said Hurruck with profound disdain ; "you and those who, like you, have come from the banks of the river which waters the Indian soil, seem to have been formed as timid and weak as women ; weep, then, like a woman, and pray in silence that the debt which you believe to have incurred with that man may be discharged by me, when the day arrives for me to settle my accounts with him ; only if I should want any assistance, which can be expected from a pusillanimous creature like yourself, forget not that I have clasped your hand in mine. Adieu, Maha warns me that it is time to fly." In fact, during the last few moments the glaring eyes and restless ears of the panther were fixed in the direction of the palace ; a slight trembling made her silky skin seem to creep over her body, her sharp claws darted out of their velvet-like sheaths, she felt the master who had ill-treated her approaching, and everything betrayed her restlessness.

Hurruck caught up his sarong and tied it round his

loins; and, light as the animal which followed him, they both cleared with a bound the barrier which separated the courtyard from the gardens. At this moment Thsermaï entered the courtyard; he was dressed in full warlike array, trousers and vest of some white material striped with gold, an ample scarlet sarong covered with brilliant flowers thrown round his figure, and on his head he wore a kuluk, a kind of cap of a cylindrical shape made of silk ornamented with gold lace; in his belt he carried the three creeses always worn on such occasions, and bore a lance in his hand. With a single glance he saw that the den in which he had left Maha was empty, and nearly at the same moment he perceived Hurruck and the panther, who had already reached the nearest slopes of the mountain, gliding through the shrubs with which its base was covered.

The Javanese prince remained for a moment as motionless as if he were trying to account for the reason of this flight; he called Hurruck, but Hurruck made no reply. The thought that the Gueber might have dreamed of robbing him of his vengeance, or of controlling him in its execution, then seemed to strike him; a cry of rage burst from his lips. His servants ran forward from every direction. "The horses, the horses!" roared Thsermaï; "the Gueber has stolen the panther,—arm yourselves, every one of you, and follow his track." For several minutes the courtyard was the scene of the wildest confusion; Thsermaï's attendants ran to and fro in terror and bewilderment, seizing anything which happened to be nearest to them, in their eagerness to obey their master's orders; the horses, terrified at the tumult, reared, plunged, and kicked, as the grooms tried to hold them. The women of the palace, who had hurried to the windows, joined their cries to the uproar which arose from the courtyard. The Javanese prince attempted to check the tumult.

"To your saddles," he cried, "but let not one of you, if he cares for his life, injure a single hair of Maha's coat, but the Gueber's head is worth its weight in gold to him

who slays him, and this palace shall be the reward of him who brings me the head of Noungal, whom you saw here this morning."

With these words, he buried his Moorish spurs in his horse's sides, so as to plunge forward; but, at this moment, a loud report was heard, from a gun discharged from behind the shrubs which formed a green belt round the palace; the animal which Thsermaï bestrode reared, beat the air with its fore feet, and fell backward in convulsions of agony. At the same moment, a man, dressed in the costume of a Malay sailor, holding a European carbine still smoking in his hand, issued from a thicket of banana-trees planted near the barrier, and advanced towards Thsermaï and his attendants. As soon as this person, who was evidently the author of the aggression which had just deprived their master of his best hunter, made his appearance, the servants of the Javanese prince first lowered and then discharged their weapons, the arrows darted into the air, and a perfect shower of balls and other missiles ploughed up the earth in every direction, and struck the branches and the bamboos round the Malay, yet without touching him.

He advanced, haughty and unmoved, nothing in his attitude or his face betraying the slightest fear; the slaves drew aside, so that he could approach Thsermaï, who was still somewhat bewildered by his sudden fall.

"Rajah," he said, "you expressed a wish for my head, just now; I have brought it myself, and have come to claim its price."

"Noungal!" exclaimed the Javanese prince.

"Yes, Noungal, who has himself come to fetch that which is his, and which you wish to withhold; Noungal, who has disdained to deliver you up to the Dutch as he threatened to do, because your life is necessary for the success of the cause he wishes to serve, because he had in his own power the means of compelling you to submit yourself to his wishes. Thsermaï, give me the slave I have confided to you."

"Fool and madman!" replied Thsermaï, "we are a

hundred, you are alone, and yet you threaten ; you have entered the tiger's lair to claim the sheep which is missing from your flock ! Shut the gates, there,—seize him, and we shall soon see if hell has made him proof against torture."

Noungal replied by one of those loud peals of laughter which had formerly so terrified Eusebius; he was answered by a loud uproar, and immediately, out of every thicket, from behind every column of the verandah, from every corner of the buildings, from every spot that could possibly conceal a human body, a crowd of men of swarthy hue, and covered with mean rags, precipitated themselves towards Thsermaï's attendants, brandishing their guns and other weapons as they advanced. "The Bohemians of the sea," exclaimed the latter.

The terror with which these formidable pirates of the Malay seas inspired the inhabitants of the interior was so great, that Thsermaï's attendants, pale, dumb, and trembling with fright, threw down their arms, and took flight like a flock of crows at the approach of a vulture. The Javanese prince tried to restrain them ; he begged, he implored, he threatened them ; he appealed to their hereditary fidelity for their rajah, they disregarded his voice, and, in their panic, even threw him down, trampled him under their feet, and then dispersed in every direction.

Left alone, Thsermaï attempted to return to his apartments, intending to plunge his creese into Arroa's heart and die by her side ; but, at a sign from their chief, four vigorous Malays threw themselves upon the young man, bound his hands and feet, in spite of his resistance, and carried him to the side of the gardens. When he had been removed out of sight, the leader of the Bohemians advanced into the middle of the throng of pirates. "As an inducement for you to follow me so far from the sea, where we rule uncontrolled, I promised you a large booty ; this palace was the price of Noungal's head, Noungal abandons it to you ; so away with you, my pretty ones." The bandits responded by shouts such as

might escape from a band of demons, and, rushing towards the ancient dwelling-place of the Sontenams, it became, in a few moments, the theatre of the most fearful scenes of violence and murder.

Argalenka had watched with profound anxiety what had just occurred. When the long line of the Bohemians of the sea had entered the palace, shrieks of despair were heard mingled amidst the shouts of triumph of the bandits; he saw a hundred daggers raised against his daughter's life, he perceived his child struggling in the arms of the pirates; in every woman's voice he fancied he recognized the voice of Arroa calling him to help her. He endeavoured to break down the iron bars which enclosed the cage, but it had been constructed for a prisoner much stronger than the poor old man, and the bars resisted his utmost efforts; he tried to attract the attention of the Bohemians: he would willingly have drawn down all their blows upon himself, so that he could have turned them aside from Arroa, but in vain.

Soon faint spirals of smoke escaped through the bamboo blinds and crept along the verandahs; soon, little tongues of flame, which split the polished tiles, made their appearance above the roof. The palace was on fire. Argalenka struggled like a maddened lion in his cage. In his despairing delirium he did not perceive that two men had approached the spot where he was confined. One of the two was Noungal; the other Thsermaï, who had been released from his bonds, but was gloomy and abstracted.

"Beduin," said Noungal to Argalenka, as he touched him with his finger, "I told you to await your daughter upon Mount Gagak; how comes it that I find you here?"

"My daughter! my daughter! she is in the hands of those men; she will perish in the flames! Open this cage, I implore you, so that I may save my child." Noungal coldly repeated his question. "How can I answer you when my child is dying—she was not on Mount Gagak, since she is here."

"Beduin, the five days do not finish until this evening."

"Ah! if my distress has touched your heart, save her, I implore you. I thought that after she had denied all knowledge of her father, life had no further trial for me on this earth; but to see her perish by such a fearful death, oh! that is more than a father's strength can bear!"

"Leave this den, and go where I told you; your daughter will be there as soon as you." And upon a sign from Noungal, Thsermaï passively opened the prison. Argalenka sprang out; but instead of directing his steps towards the blue summits of the mountain to which the Malay had pointed, he attempted to rush into the palace.

But, from its slight construction, the fire had spread with prodigious rapidity. The pirates hurried out from every exit, laden with booty; others dragging slaves after them. Cries of the wounded and dying were heard in the interior, mingled with the crackling sound of the burning wainscots; and no sooner had Argalenka made his way to the door, which the flames pouring from it had converted into an impassable barrier, than the roof fell in with an awful crash. The Beduin fell upon his knees, covering his face with his hands. Noungal drew him back.

"Is the Beduin mad?" he said, in a voice less harsh than its former tones. "Did he not hear me say that his daughter is at this moment travelling along the sides of Mount Gagak? Does he wish that in the desert, alone and unprotected, she should become the prey of the tigers of Gidadal? Has Argalenka no longer a father's affection for his child?" The emotion of the poor old man was so violent that he could not answer; he rose, and directed his steps towards the point in the horizon which Noungal had indicated, as fast as his tottering steps would permit him.

The Malay returned to the Javanese prince, who in gloomy silence was contemplating the ruins of his palace.

"Well, rajah," he said, "you see I did not deceive you when I told you that it was no foolish passion which decided me to require the slave Arroa from you. Let her accomplish the designs for which I destine her, but which you cannot comprehend, and very soon, should your fancy

for her not have passed away, you can bring her back again to your palace."

"My palace!" replied Thsermaï, with an irony full of bitterness and gloom, as he pointed to its crumbling walls and colonnades.

"The palace of the sovereigns of Java can only be that which the lord and master of the island is now dwelling in. You will enter Buitenzorg in triumph, and will thank me, rajah, for having relieved you of this child's toy here." And Noungal uttered a rallying cry, to gather his forces once more around him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our readers will recollect that the palace of Thsermaï had been erected in a valley formed by the bases of three of the highest peaks in the island, Mount Sadjira, Mount Sari, and Mount Gagak. It was towards the foot of the last-named mountain that Argalenka had bent his steps on leaving the bamboo enclosure which separated the gardens of the dalam from the wooded slopes, at the foot of which they had been traced out. The impression which Noungal's words, and particularly the tone of his voice, had produced had been so profound that his confidence returned; and at every cross-road, at the corner of every path, behind every thicket, he expected to see his beloved child make her appearance; he felt as if every moment he should feel himself clasped in her arms. This faith was so profound, that the old man, weakened far more by the privations he had undergone than by age, seemed to have recovered the strength and elasticity of youth: he walked on rapidly, jumping over the worm-eaten trunks of trees which lay across the paths, gliding through the creepers which extended their intertwining branches from tree to tree and formed a canopy above his head.

Rapid, however, as his progress was, it did not prevent

him hearing a loud noise, which proceeded from the valley; he turned his head in the direction of the sound, and saw the destruction of Thsermaï's palace. The frail woodwork had rekindled the flames, which darted their thousand tongues of fire into the thick volumes of smoke which mounted to the clouds, while the wind carried towards the Beduin small pieces of the ignited wood of which the building was constructed. At this sight Argalenka's knees sank under him, his heart almost ceased beating, his body trembled, as the leaves of the papaw-tree tremble in the breeze, a horrible thought took possession of his mind. Had not the Malay deceived him, after all? Might not this kindling mass be Arroa's tomb? Might not those festoons of fire, which illumined the black clouds of smoke that rose from the burning dalam, be the ephemeral epitaph of his poor child? A cry of despair broke from the Beduin's lips; he fell on his knees, and raised his hands to heaven, as he imploringly pronounced the name of Buddha.

This poignant anguish, however, did no more than pass rapidly through the poor man's mind. He turned again to the hope, with which the energy we have seen him display had inspired him, and clung to it with passion as his sole possession—embraced it as the drowning man embraces the branches which keep him from floating down the torrent. He again rose to his feet, and, almost fainting with exhaustion and emotion, staggered onward on his course, pausing from time to time to call out the name of Arroa, in heart-rending accents. Before long he had passed through the teak-forest, which forms a tunic round Mount Gagak, and beyond which the bare and desolate peaks rear their lofty crests. Night had closed in; the valley, illumined by the dying glare of the flames which tinged the neighbouring trees with their blood-like reflections, could still be distinguished; but the topmost peak of Mount Gagak was no longer visible, except as a dark looming mass against the star-lit heavens. In the extremity of his deep distress, Argalenka was not long before he quitted the path he had hitherto followed, and

soon his feet stumbled against the fragments of basalt, lava, and ashes, with which the sides of Mount Gagak, like those of all the other extinct volcanos of the island, are covered. He found that he had lost his way; he turned round in quest of it again; but, having proceeded about a dozen paces, he struck against an immense block of stone, which in time far remote had probably been vomited from the crater, and had fallen upright, like a monolith, a giant sentinel in the middle of this desert. Argalenka tried to turn back, but the darkness had closed so impenetrably around him that he was unable to distinguish even the nearest object; he found it impossible to take a single step without falling.

Again, for the second time, did despair seize upon the the Beduin; he threw himself on the ground; it seemed as if his pious resignation to the will of the god he believed in had abandoned him at last; he rolled in the dust; he tore his face and body with his hands; the passionate appeals he addressed to Arroa were mingled with the wildest imprecations; he accused the Malay, he accused mankind, he even accused Buddha. Suddenly, amid the funereal silence which surrounded him, a deep roar, like distant thunder, pealed from rock to rock, from echo to echo. Any noise heard amidst this solitude, which seemed like the region of death itself, was a hope, and every hope the Beduin connected with his daughter; he raised his head, he rose to his feet, and waited. Soon a second hoarse murmur like the first passed by Argalenka, carried along by the breeze. This second cry was more distinct than the former —Argalenka could no longer entertain a doubt—it was the roaring of a wild beast. As he saw every illusion as to his daughter's fate disappear one by one, Argalenka experienced so terrible a revulsion of feeling that his grief became delirium, and far from shuddering at the approach of the messenger of death which the wings of the breeze bore in his direction, he cried out in a transport of fever: "Blessed be thou for announcing that my deliverance is at hand; blessed be thou who approachest to put an end to my miseries. Thy victims have accustomed thee to

the lamentations of terror, to the maledictions of despair, to the convulsions of dying agonies! approach, and thou wilt find a breast ready to present itself naked and unarmed to the sharp claws eager to tear it! approach, and thou wilt find a body throbbing with happiness when thy bloody muzzle shall drink its lifeblood! approach, and the last contraction of the heart thou preyest upon shall thank thee for the friendly office thou hast performed! Delay not, thou that seekest thy prey; I am patient and resigned, and eager for thy arrival!"

And then, like a lover devoured by anxiety for the loving signal, and who hurries to the trysting-place to anticipate the moment of his happiness, Argalenka directed his steps towards the spot whence the roaring had proceeded, crawling when his feet refused to bear him, advancing in spite of all the obstacles he encountered, his eagerness only increasing when the cries of the wild beast, bursting forth in quick succession, proved to him that he had diminished the space which separated him from it. In this way he reached the westerly slope of Mount Gagak, the side which overlooks the district of the Préangers. It seemed as if the stones with which the flanks of the mountain were strewn, assumed, not only colossal but regular proportions; he still continued to advance, and perceived that he was near one of those numerous temples with which the piety of the earlier inhabitants had covered the island of Java—marvellous monuments of sculpture and architecture, which attested that the former race equalled in civilization and power those of Egypt and Hindostan, but all of which have fallen into ruins since the followers of Buddha have been crushed or driven away from the island by the disciples of Mahomet. The roarings evidently proceeded from the interior of the temple. The animal had probably established its lair in the precincts of the building formerly consecrated to religious worship. This contrast rendered Argalenka more firm than ever in his resolution. He derived the greatest comfort and consolation from the idea of dying amidst the ruins where his fathers had for-

merly worshipped; it seemed as if the god in whom he believed approved his intention, since he allowed him to carry it into execution in the holy place set apart for worship. He made himself a passage through the overthrown columns, the statues, and bas reliefs, with which the precincts of the temple were strewn, and which the parasitical plants interweaved with their thousand folds, and at last reached the peristyle of the building.

This temple was like the majority of those which the traveller comes across when travelling in the interior of the island; it was constructed of several terraces ranged one above the other, adapted to the irregular shape of the mountain against which they were built. These terraces were built upon long lines of columns, covered with the most singular carvings, and of huge blocks of masonry, with gigantic niches still containing their mutilated statues. At the top of the upmost terrace of all was a vast dome, denoting where the sanctuary of Buddha had been placed; a double row of cupolas, lighter in form and lower in position, surrounded the dome which served as a crown. The nearer Argalenka approached the spot where he expected to meet his death, his agitation and anxiety disappeared; gradually his religious feelings triumphed over his bitter grief, although that had reached its utmost pitch; his resolution remained unshaken, but his calmness was restored, and his lips could again invoke the name of Buddha.

At the very moment he passed through the large gap where the gates had been, the roaring of the animal, which in the depth of the night had guided him so far, resounded louder and more terrible than ever beneath the vaults through which the sound reverberated in sullen murmurs, but at the same time the eyes of the Beduin perceived something which struck him as singular in the extreme. At the upper end of the building, whose length seemed doubled by the disposition of the raised terraces, through the forest of broken columns, of decapitated statues, which extended from the base to the summit of

the temple, from the door to the sanctuary itself, he perceived a reddish light, which was reflected upon the polished stones of the principal vault. Argalenka knew the dislike which all wild animals have to fire, and yet it seemed evident that the tiger or the panther, whose roars he had heard so frequently, could not be far from the spot where the light was shining; a circumstance which filled him with surprise. He advanced among the ruins with which the interior of the temple was strewn, and ascending the flight of steps, every one of which, loosened by the grass that had grown between their crevices, trembled under his feet, he courageously continued his ascent.

As he advanced the light became brighter; he followed in the shadows of the vault the capricious flickering of the flames; but it was only on ascending the steep path leading to the topmost terrace, which was surmounted by the dome, that what was passing in the interior of the sanctuary could be perceived. This sanctuary was elliptical in shape: at the end was a gigantic niche, in which stood the statue of Buddha, which, by a kind of miracle, still remained intact in the midst of the general destruction which surrounded it. The god was seated, with his legs crossed, upon a pedestal represented by an immense lotus-flower; his attitude was one of meditation and prayer; a small pair of drawers were fastened round his loins, one hand pointed upwards, the other was resting upon his knee; round his neck he wore the triple collar; his head was covered with an Indian cap with large ears or lappets, in some respects resembling the Phrygian cap; the wall of the niche was covered with emblems and inscriptions in Javanese characters.

Argalenka, under any other circumstances, would have knelt down with pious respect before this image of his god; but there were figures there, living, breathing, moving figures, before him, which absorbed his undivided attention. About twenty paces from the sacred niche a large fire of brushwood had been lighted, and in the man

who was busily attending to the fire, Argalenka recognized Hurruck.

Thsermaï's panther was sitting on its haunches behind the Gueber, its paws stretched out, hiding its head behind the body of its new master, so as to protect as much as possible its sensitive eyeballs from the glare of the flame. But there was something which had attracted the Beduin's attention more than the panther, more than Hurruck, more than the statue of Buddha, namely, a female figure seated close to the wall : this figure remained so perfectly motionless that, had not the wind, which made the flame flicker, occasionally agitated the folds of a transparent veil with which she was enveloped from head to foot, she might have been taken for one of the stone statues that ornamented the old temple.

The figure in question was leaning forward, with her face resting on her knees ; she appeared to be asleep ; but, if Argalenka had been unable to distinguish her features, he had already recognized, under the transparent tissue which concealed her face, the costume worn by the young girls of his own tribe—the sarong of coarse cotton, covered with bright flowers ; the corset, with short sleeves of a dark-green stuff, confining the breasts in two hemispheres of sandal wood, and revealing the naked flesh of the wearer from the lowest rib to the metal plate which fastens the petticoat to the hips. He had remarked that, instead of the diadem and pins of precious stones or glass which the Mahomedan women wear, she who was sitting before him merely had a few of the purple flowers of the mantèga, and a few sprigs of jessamine wreathed round her head, offering a strong contrast to the ebon blackness of her hair.

He thought he was dreaming ; he seemed to be under the influence of some hallucination ; for, as well in the costume as in the height and figure of her whose face was hidden, he recognized the costume, the form and stature of Arroa, not as the mistress of the Frank doctor,—not as the favourite of the powerful Thsermaï, but dressed as though she were the daughter of the poorest

serf on the latter's domains. The old man stood still, trembling and pale as ashes ; a cold sweat bedewed his face ; the fire which Hurruck had kindled, the columns, the whole temple seemed to swim round him in giddy confusion. He tried to speak, but his voice stuck in his dry throat ; he breathed heavily, stretched out his hands towards the apparition of one who so much resembled his daughter, but could not move from where he stood. Suddenly, the panther raised her head, pricked up her ears, opened widely her half-closed eyes, and stretched forward her enormous muzzle in the direction whence the noise which had roused her had proceeded ; she drew in her breath with a deep heavy sound. At last, and as if moved by steel springs, she rose threateningly ; then again laid herself flat down on the ground, her hind-quarters more elevated than the rest of her body, her head resting on her front paws, whisking the air with her tail, collecting, as it were, all the strength and elasticity of her muscles, in readiness to bound forward at a moment.

But as soon as the Beduin saw the figure which so strongly resembled his daughter, his desire to live returned. He now feared that which was worse than death—the dread of dying without having received his daughter's embrace. Terror and love seemed to restore to him a portion of his strength. "Help me, Gueber," he cried.

"Gently, Maha, gently," said Hurruck : "if it be a friend, respect him ; if an enemy, there will be time enough to bring your talons to the aid of my dagger when I call you." While he was speaking thus, Hurruck had seized a burning brand from the fire, drew his creese from its sheath, and, holding the one in his right and the other in his left hand, advanced in the direction of the voice. He recognized Argalenka, and, restoring the bright blade to its sandal-wood sheath, took the Beduin by the arm. So it is you, Argalenka?" he said : you need not fear approaching. The animal is a friend very different to those for whom the title has been expressly invented

Maha only likes those I like, and she hates only those I hate." In fact, when Maha saw her master talking familiarly with the new-comer, the beast yawned in a formidable manner, and resumed her inoffensive position.

But Argalenka could not reply to the Gueber's salutation; relieved from his apprehensions, all his bitter anguish of doubt and uncertainty returned: he pointed with his finger to the motionless, veiled figure, and said to Hurruck, with convulsive agitation, "There, there, there!" Hurruck hung down his head sorrowfully, and made no answer to the Beduin's question. "For pity's sake, Gueber, in the name of all you believe in, in the name of all you love, in the name of the misery and suffering I have undergone for my child's sake, answer me —Is that my daughter?"

"When the rainy wind," murmured Hurruck, "blows upon the balmy banks of the Tjilivong, the waters of the river are covered with the red and white flowers of the shrubs which line its banks; they are flowers still, but they have neither the lovely tints nor the sweet perfume for which one loves them."

"What mean you? can my daughter be dead, and have they only restored me her corpse?" Argalenka did not wait for the Gueber's answer, but sprang towards his daughter, and attempted to throw his arms round her neck. But at the cry which burst from the Beduin's lips, Arroa disengaged her head, looked her father full in the face, but without seeming to recognize him; her eyes expressed nothing but indifference and stupor. The Beduin staggered back affrighted.

"Arroa, Arroa!" cried the poor old man; "it is I, your father: the master is no longer here to thrust himself between your caresses and the face on which your lips have pressed so many kisses in your childhood; he is not here now to force you to crush back into your heart the natural affection of a child for him who gave her birth: you can love me now, Arroa, we are free." The young girl never indicated by word or gesture that she comprehended what her father had been saying.

"Arroa, Arroa," he continued, "if you wish it, I will wean myself from your caresses; if you wish it, I will resign myself never again to hear the name of father pass your lips: I am old, ugly, poor, while you, alas! are accustomed to other kisses than those which my withered lips can give you; you are used to the rich clothing of rajahs, while the rags which cover my body fill you with disgust. I can resign myself without a murmur; I will forgive you, and will implore Buddha to let the chastisement of your fault fall upon those who, more guilty than you are, have perverted you by luxury and voluptuousness. But speak to me; at least, let me hear your voice, so that my other senses and my eyes may say to me, 'Your daughter is not dead.'"

Not a single syllable seemed to make the slightest impression upon the young girl. When the Beduin had spoken of voluptuousness, Arroa's eyes glistened with a strange light, her lips half opened with an expression of passionate longing, her nostrils dilated, her bosom heaved, and the pale golden colour of her complexion became of a darker and deeper tinge. Suddenly she said, "Come, come, thou whom my heart has chosen, and which beats thickly and heavily at thy approach, 'tis now the hour when night spreads her mantle, covered with stars over the face of the earth, to hide the great mystery of the resurrection and the life; the shades of evening combine with the expiring rays of day; the forest trembles like a timid girl; the earth opens her bosom to the vapours which make her a fruitful mother; flower leans caressingly towards flower, to whisper its tale of love; the leaves of the banana, agitated by the breeze, murmur its marriage song, while the bengali beats its wings in answer to its companion's call; and the furious transports of the tiger make the dome of the mighty woods resound with its wild uproar. Come to my cool and perfumed couch; my soul only awaits thine to combine with it as the rich perfume of the citron-tree mingles in the night air with the bitter odour of the cordenia. Come, my mouth knows words softer and sweeter than the rustling of leaves,—

than the song of the flower,—than the warbling of the nightingale."

Argalenka listened to his daughter with a stupefaction bordering on despair; he made no effort to interrupt her; it was only when her incoherent language betrayed that her reason was affected, that he buried his face in his hands and wept bitterly. Arroa continued to pour out her amorous wailings to the air; by degrees her voice grew weaker and fainter, and she sunk again into the lethargy from which her father's arrival had roused her.

Hurruck sat silent and serious, never moving, except to throw upon the dying embers an armful of dry brushwood. Arroa's wild chant produced no impression upon the Gueber, whose eyes were bent upon Argalenka with an expression full of compassion, forming a singular contrast with the usual harshness of his features. For several hours he suffered the Beduin to give unrestrained course to his grief, but at last he advanced towards him, seized him by the arm, and leading him forcibly towards that part of the sanctuary which was the farthest from Arroa, compelled him to sit down. Argalenka offered no resistance to his companion; he yielded with the docility of a child, and obeyed him mechanically. "Well," said Hurruck, as a sinister smile flittered round his lips, "they have kept their word thoroughly, they have restored your child to you."

"Yes," replied the Beduin, who, in his utter prostration of mind and body, had failed to seize the irony of the meaning which was conveyed in Hurruck's tone of voice; —"yes, they have not deceived the miserable father. May Buddha, whose hand weighs so cruelly upon me, forgive them the evil they have wrought, in consideration of the pity they have at last shown for my bitter distress."

The Gueber shrugged his shoulders with a disdainful gesture, and the compassion which had been depicted in his face was exchanged for a contemptuous smile. "Has not the Miduzak,—whose topmost summit reaches the clouds, and which was a mighty tree, even when the fires, kindled by the hand of Ormuzd, burnt upon these mountain

peaks,—learnt more than the fern which is born, grows, and dies at its feet in the course of a single season? You wear on your head the crown of wisdom, upon your brow the signs of age, have you never heard that in the knowledge of evil Man was nearly as powerful as Arimhu? that he has discovered the secret of those terrible mixtures which destroy the reason, and, leaving the body to live on, drive away the divine spirit which animates it?"

"How do you mean, Gueber?"

"I mean that your daughter has drank one of those mixtures."

"Who could have given it her?" replied Argalenka; "who is the man that could have been so abandoned by his god to commit so infamous a crime without a motive?"

"I did not say that your daughter's madness had no motive, that there was not some strong ground for producing it: I said no such thing, Argalenka."

"I do not understand you."

"Listen. If I unravel the whole plot before you; if I show the hand which has crushed the plants and insects, prepared and administered the poison; if I point out the governing will which, on two occasions having found docile instruments to carry out its dark designs, fears that this time it might be less successful, and has by a philter disposed the third to become the passive instrument of his purpose; if I set this man before your eyes,—the infernal spirit which has assumed our human envelope to persecute us,—odious in the sight of heaven and earth,—advancing implacably to the end he has in view, that of prolonging his own detestable existence through blood and tears, without a thought for the corpses with which his path is strewn;—if I prove all this to you,—tell me whether you do not now think that vengeance is sometimes a divine inspiration, a holy work; and, looking upon the wreck that has been made of your daughter, will you not ask me, beg me, implore me to share mine with you?"

"Twice before, you have put this question to me, and twice already has my answer been the same, but you

will find that the increase of my bitter distress has in no way weakened my faith in the holy precepts of my law. If the man you speak of has committed the crimes you assert, he will not escape the hand of Buddha, whatever be his power and his pride. The breath of Buddha can, if it please, disperse in the air the highest mountains of the island, as it does the grains of sand on the seashore; but I do not wish to offend him by interfering with his rights. Men can saturate my heart with grief, but cannot make a drop of malice penetrate it. They can cause my tears to flow until they can flow no longer, but will never force a curse from my lips, which have received no authority to curse."

Hurruck rose to his feet, and gathered the folds of his sarong around him. "Poor fool!" he murmured; "fate is resolved not to spare your heart a single bitter trial. Twice, it has thrown you in my path; twice, I have been inspired with a feeling of pity for your destiny; twice, I have attempted to save you from it; and twice, you have remained deaf to my voice, more resolute in your cowardly weakness than I in my hate. Perhaps it is better as it is, for you could not have made the needful sacrifice to carry out my plans; you would only have fettered the vengeance which I wished you to join in. The mighty beasts of our forest seek not gazelles or doves to share their projects against men. The typhoon, which lashes the ocean into fury, which rends asunder rocks, which bows the trees of the forest like the corn in a field of wheat, cannot be moved by the lamentations it evokes. Farewell; now, as upon the road from Weltevreden, I say to you, let us separate: follow your own path—you who have forgiveness for all—as I shall follow mine; I, who have changed my name for one more terrible, that of Retribution; I, who wait until it pleases Buddha, or Ormuzd, or Mahomet, to punish the three men who have offended me;—I remain to dog their footsteps, for the day is fast approaching when I shall render them evil for evil, despair for despair. Listen, 'tis the *lori* *

* *Lori*, a kind of parrot.

which leaves its roosting-place in the thicket for the topmost branch of the loftiest tree, to accost the rising orb of day. It is time we leave this temple."

Argalenka seemed buried in thought; he knew not where to find an asylum for his unhappy child. Hurruck read what was passing in the Beduin's mind. "Listen," he said; "one last service. Do not remain in this district; it would be tempting Providence: go to the province of the Peangers, upon the westerly slope of Mount Gagak, at the foot of the hill on which this temple stands; you will find a fountain issuing from the rock, with its waters flowing towards the plain in a narrow stream. Follow the banks of this stream in the direction of the setting sun. Soon you will find it grow larger; like the child which passes from youth to maturity, it will become a torrent, then a river as large and as rapid as the Tjilivong, when it reaches Weltevreden. Do not leave its banks. When you perceive the sea like a green belt in the horizon, look for the point where the peak of Mount Kavogan, which will be opposite to you, seems exactly to cover a second mountain, which you will perceive in the far distance. Advance a thousand paces in that direction; and upon your right-hand, in a wood of *arecas*, which is only half an hour's walk from the village of Zand, which gives its name to the bay, you will discover a deserted hut. This hut is mine; I built it when I used to hunt the cobra-capello in the valleys of Kavogan. Enter my poor dwelling without fear; the bird converts to its own use the forsaken nest it finds as it wings its onward flight. In one of the corners of the hut, under a heap of litter, you will find mats, and everything else you may require, and the woods, the fields, and the sea will supply you bountifully with food; there you will be in greater safety than here. There it is possible that the danger which still menaces you may pass away from you and from your child."

"Alas!" said the Beduin, "it is a five days' march from this place to the seashore: how can I, a poor, weak old man, hope to convey there this unhappy girl, who cannot understand nor hear me even."

"Your daughter, when I first saw her, was mounted on one of Thsermai's horses; for he, who had not hesitated to rob her of that most precious of all possessions, intelligence, feared that the feet of his victim might be injured by the stones in the road. The horse is yonder, close to the temple."

"One last service, Hurruck—help me to place Arroa upon the horse."

The Gueber did as Argalenka asked. The latter having roused his daughter, they quitted the temple which had sheltered them. The horse was saddled, and Arroa, who followed them without uttering a word, and obeyed them like an automaton, was placed upon the animal's back, while the Beduin took hold of the bridle. "Thanks, Hurruck," said the latter to the Gueber, who drew aside to let him pass. "Buddha will reward you for the pity you have shown, and for the services you have rendered me. I will pray daily that he will do so."

Hurruck made no reply, but looked at Arroa with a keen attention. Suddenly, and without bidding his companion farewell, he called to Maha, and hurried away with his usual rapidity in the direction of the eastern slope leading to the province of Batavia. Argalenka thereupon took his departure, and descended the declivity which led to the district of the Peangers, following the course of the stream as indicated by the Gueber.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

After the death of the negress Cora, and the apparition of Noungal upon the theatre of the drama in which Eusebius Van den Beck had played so lamentable a part, the young Dutchman had hurried forward across the plain. His mind was so shaken by the late occurrences, that, without heeding whether he was turning his back to

the village of Garoët, where he had left Esther, he ran forwards as fast as his strength would allow him, baring his forehead to the breeze, trying to cool his heated brain, plunging across the tilled fields and flowery dales, clambering up the sides of the mountains, fleeing from human habitations and his fellow-creatures; for now that he had seen Noungal once again, he fancied he saw an enemy in every person he met. This maddened speed lasted until fatigue, and, more than fatigue, until the overpowering heat of a vertical sun had acted upon Eusebius's strength; breathless and exhausted, he fell fainting on the ground.

When he recovered his senses the day was declining; the golden disk of the setting sun was disappearing in the horizon, behind a tracery of ruddy clouds, and tinged the peaks of the Taïkoekoe with its purple hues.

Eusebius had some difficulty in recovering the mastery of his thoughts; he could scarcely remember what had taken place during the preceding evening; his despair had left behind it a feeling which almost paralysed his senses; he staggered to and fro; his head seemed empty; the slightest sound, the merest movement caused him the acutest suffering; an ardent thirst, a terrible fever possessed him. Instinctively he looked for water. As he gazed around him, he observed some ferns, whose bright-green colour, contrasting powerfully with the dried appearance of the other plants which surrounded them, seemed to indicate the bed of a stream. He crawled towards it. The burning heat of the midday sun had dried the stream, but the earth was still moist. He thought, that by ascending its course, he might be more fortunate when he arrived at its source. The young Dutchman collected all his strength and courage, and crawled in that direction.

It was not long before he perceived a rock, from which drops of water were oozing fast, and falling into a basin, protected by the shadow of the rock from the heat of the sun. Instead of precipitating himself towards this source of renewed existence, Eusebius remained motion-

less, dumb, aghast with terror. He rose to his feet, and gazing round him on every side, perceived that chance had brought him back to the fountain of diamonds which had been so fatal to poor Cora. His hair stood on end; his frame was seized with a convulsive nervous trembling; he shuddered at the thought of seeing the panting body of the negress at his feet, and instinctively he closed his eyes. Then overcoming his terror by a powerful effort, he again gazed in every direction. But nowhere could he perceive the corpse of Cora. He might almost have fancied himself a prey to some horrible nightmare, had not the earth, at a couple of paces from where he stood, shown numerous dark-coloured stains, fresh and clammy to the touch. These stains had evidently been produced by the blood of the negress.

Relieved at not finding himself in the presence of his victim's body, Eusebius breathed again, but thickly. Delirium seemed to take possession of his senses. In the morning, in the perturbed state of his mind, he had allowed an opportunity of acquiring immense wealth to escape him, which would enable him to treat Basilius's dark designs with indifference; and now, by the most singular piece of good fortune, this opportunity was again placed within his grasp.

He forgot his troubles, he forgot fever and thirst; before thinking of calming the one or assuaging the other, he threw himself on his knees beside the fountain, and plunged his arms to the bottom to seize the precious stones which he had both seen and handled a few hours before. But when he took out his hands full of them, there was nothing to distinguish them from the pebbles with which the rocks were plentifully sprinkled. He took one, broke it between two blocks of stone; it was flint, nothing more. Trembling with anguish, he tried the experiment a dozen times, and again a dozen times with the same result. His heart at last seemed as if it would break; he seated himself upon a projection of the rock, and wept bitterly. The violent disappointment he had just experienced had suddenly restored his mind to its usual clearness, and his recollection returned. The first

tear he shed was bestowed upon his mad hopes; but the heart, softened by grief, is not long before it returns to softer emotions. He wept for himself, he deplored his sad destiny, and more than all, he wept for Esther.

The presumption of a few days ago had entirely disappeared; he seemed, now, clearly to understand his sad infirmity of purpose; he saw how, one by one, the sinister predictions of Doctor Basilius had been realized; he asked if he should have sufficient courage and strength to resist the third and last trial; and, measuring himself by his recollection of the trammels which surrounded him, and face to face in this struggle with the supernatural power of his adversary, he felt his courage give way. His first thought was to go in search of Esther, to avow to her everything that had taken place, to implore her forgiveness, to propose that they should both seek in death the triumph of their mutual affection, and a refuge against the infernal machinations of the terrible Noungal. The brief rest he had just taken, the resolution he had made, inspired him with renewed strength; he rose, and began his journey homeward. But the night was dark, he feared to trust himself in the poisoned plain, and advanced with the greatest hesitation.

He had been walking for about an hour, when a dull, confused sound broke the dead silence of the night. It was the noise made by the hoofs of horses striking the hard ground; it advanced rapidly towards Eusebius, who threw himself into a coffee-plantation, and hid himself among the foliage of one of the trees. A dozen of the native horsemen who constitute the governor's guard, and are entrusted with the duties of police of the provincial districts, defiled a few paces from the young man.

Galloping at their head, and mounted on a horse without a saddle, rode a man who was the only one of his companions who was not carrying a long lance with a triangular flag. This man appeared to be acting as the guide of the others. Eusebius saw him, in the gloom of the evening, pointing out to those who followed him the

peaks of Panderango; Eusebius fancied he recognized Noungal in this guide. Every drop of blood in his body congealed in his veins; a cold sweat poured down his face. It appeared almost certain that the Malay must have denounced him to the authorities of the province, and having denounced him had undertaken to deliver the criminal up to justice.

Eusebius's first impulse was to issue from his retreat, deliver himself into the hands of the soldiers, and confide his destiny to the justice of his fellow-creatures. But the time of strong resolutions had passed away; he had lost his former energetic loyalty of character ever since he had allowed himself to be tempted by the demon of avarice. An almost imperceptible spot is sufficient to alter the quality of the finest fruit. He dreaded what might be the consequences of this resolution if it were carried out. It was madness to indulge in any hope of persuading the judicial functionaries of the nineteenth century that any one could become the victim of supernatural machinations: would not those judges, on the contrary, feel convinced that there was nothing in his revelations beyond the vulgar cunning of the criminal, who assumes madness in order to save his life? He saw himself dishonoured, branded, condemned, and, at the very least, confined for the remainder of his natural life in a madhouse.

And then he thought of Esther; and as an excuse for his own cowardly irresolution, he took shelter behind his affection for her. He would not for a moment believe she was capable of supporting this trial victoriously; it seemed impossible that his wife's affection—that affection which he declared was the most precious possession still remaining to him,—would not fail him when human justice would be suspended over the head of the husband whose name she bore; when the publicity of a trial would have added other scandals to the treason towards herself which she already had the right to reproach him with, and which he pretended was owing to Noungal's instrumentality.

In losing the serenity of his own conscience, he had lost the principal faith of all strength; in doubting him-

self he had learnt to doubt others. He resolved to see Esther before he incurred the risks of the sentence which awaited him. But if they were already in pursuit of him in the neighbourhood of Taïkoekoe, it was hardly probable they would have neglected to surround the inn at Garoët, where they would of course await his return.

Eusebius determined to quit the neighbourhood, and to send at a later period, a messenger to his wife to summon her to him. He guided himself by the stars, endeavouring to make his way to the sea-coast, which he knew must be a few miles towards the west. He reached the seashore at daybreak, and then bent his steps northward; he hoped in this way to reach the cultivated portion of the district of the Préangers where he might succeed in finding a place of safety, from which place it would be easy to inform Esther of his situation. For four days he walked in this direction, subsisting on the shell-fish which he picked up along the shore, upon the wild fruit which he gathered from the trees that grew along the coast, and sleeping upon the rocks of the cliffs.

But Eusebius Van den Beck had presumed too much upon his already shattered strength. The fever which undermined his health increased every moment. His torn and tattered garments no longer preserved his body from the sweltering heat of the sun; his feet, which were but inadequately protected by his shoes, were cut and bleeding from contact with the sharp stones and broken shells with which his path was strewn. Soon, his limbs refused to sustain him any longer, his weakness increased, his giddiness made a thousand fantastic shapes flit before his eyes. An utter sense of despair took possession of him, a despair which inspired him with a contempt for the terror to which he had yielded in fleeing from the horsemen to whom Noungal was acting as guide. Comparing one kind of death with another, that which he was apparently doomed to suffer in the desert, far away from all assistance, deprived of all consolation, seemed far more terrible than that which the law reserves for murderers, and he

resolved no longer to avoid human habitations as he had hitherto done.

He was standing upon the flat sands of the seashore, to which the sun's reflected rays gave the appearance of an immense sheet of fire : to his right he perceived a bright green spot, and among the slender trunks of the palm-trees the bamboo roofs of numerous habitations. He endeavoured to reach it. But as he advanced, the little island of verdure seemed gradually to retire. He fancied he could touch it, when suddenly he saw the huts half a mile from him, and he found beside him nothing but a few stunted and shrivelled shrubs, a burnt-up vegetation, and arid rocks. Thus deceived, his despair was converted into a kind of rage. He burst forth into the most furious imprecations against Noungal, against her who had been that fiend's latest instrument ; he cursed his own destiny, he blasphemed Providence who had abandoned him, he rolled upon the sand, he struck himself with his clenched fists, and shrieked and groaned in a voice which seemed to have nothing human in it.

Gradually his senses lost their activity ; a mist was spread between his eyes and everything that surrounded him ; a hoarse respiration broke painfully from his parched throat. It seemed as if poor Eusebius's dying moments were fast approaching. The agony he suffered was so terrible, his distress so horrible, that he began to invoke death as the only means of shortening his suffering. As if this last wish had been heard, he felt at the same moment upon his leg something cold and clammy. He looked down and perceived a little serpent, which had rolled itself round his ancle. It was one of those vipers which in Java are called the bidoudak, the smallest of the numerous serpents of the island, but the one whose bite is perhaps the most dangerous of all. The reptile's black and gold scales glistened in the sun's rays, its scarlet eyes were fixed upon those of Eusebius, as it darted out its forked tongue with a slight hiss of menace.

In his then state of utter prostration Eusebius had no energy left to withdraw from the danger which threatened

him. He fell upon the ground and fainted away. At this moment a man, laden with a bundle of dried wood, passed by. His gaze embraced in a single glance both Eusebius and the bidoudak, which, reassured by the immobility of its victim, had crawled along Van den Beck's clothes and had reached his neck, as if it were selecting the most favourable place for its bite.

The man dropped his burden, took a flexible branch of the wild cinnamon which he stripped of its leaves, approached Eusebius very softly, and struck the bidoudak with his wand with such dexterity that he cut it into two. The separate parts writhed about for a few moments as if they would have joined together, and fell upon the ground. The man, in whom our readers will probably have recognized Argalenka, then looked attentively at the person he had just saved from death. His eyes filled with tears, he fell on his knees, and raising his hands to heaven, he cried,—"Thy servant thanks thee, Buddha, for he who lies before me is the man who opened the hand of liberality to the poor Beduin, and thou hast not wished that one of thy children should enter thy presence with a conscience overburdened with the debt of gratitude."

It was only on trying to awaken Eusebius, whom he thought to be asleep, that Argalenka perceived that the young man had fainted. He knew that his task was not completed, and he called to Arroa to come to his assistance. While the old man was employed in stripping the neighbouring shrubs of the dry wood which was needed for the purposes of their little household, the young Indian girl, indolently seated upon the banks of a stream, amused herself, with that profound attention which children and persons who have been deprived of their senses infuse into their amusements, by looking at the water flow over her feet, which she had plunged into the bed of the stream.

"My child," cried Argalenka, "here is a man, who on an evil day, feared not to interpose between your father and those who persecuted him. He is lying in this wood

senseless. Buddha has said that the remembrance of a benefit ought to survive to the fourth generation; will you not help me to render good for good? Bring some water to cool his lips. Alas!" resumed the poor old man, "I am always forgetting that the evil spirit has left me nothing but the outside casing of my poor daughter, that her reason is wandering in the shades of darkness which precede the resting-place of the elect. If she does not hear, neither can she understand what I ask her."

But, to the Beduin's great surprise, at the moment he rose to go himself to the stream to fetch the water, Arroa made her appearance, holding in her hand a leaf of the banana-tree, which she had rolled into a kind of cup, and from which the water was escaping drop by drop. She advanced straight to Eusebius, sat down by his side, gently raised his head, placed it on her knees, and, opening his parched and pallid lips, poured between them what her little vase still preserved of the cool liquid.

"Arroa, Arroa!" cried Argalenka, forgetting Eusebius in the trouble which this appearance of intelligence in his daughter caused him—"Arroa, can it be possible you will be restored to me!"

Arroa remained several moments without answering; her gaze, fixed upon the senseless stranger, had become more earnest than ever, and she continued to overwhelm him with the tenderest solicitude. "Old man!" she exclaimed at last, in a hard, dry, ringing voice, "is there no virtue but in vain words? Cannot the gratitude you speak of inspire you with what ought to be done to help one who has helped you? It has not yet occurred to you, I suppose, that Buddha has made the skin of the white man for the shade and for a cool temperature, as well as the brilliant hues of the flower of the rose-tree; the greatest enemy of both is the burning sun of our climate. Remove him, you call your friend, from the burning effect of the sun's rays, which dry up the sources of his life."

Argalenka obeyed his daughter implicitly; lifted Eusebius in his arms, and carried him to the banks of the

stream, which was sheltered by a clump of gigantic palms. Arroa resumed her position beside the young man; but neither the sheltered situation, nor the cool air, nor the water with which the Indian bathed his face, could revive him.

Arroa's agitation increased the more the efforts she made were unsuccessful. "May the curses of all evil spirits be on me," she exclaimed, with an extraordinary burst of passion, "if the breath of his life should pass away while he is in my hand. Will it please you to wait, old man, until the bidoudaks, or the tigers of the jungle, approach to help me? Run to the hut, take the horse; you will probably find in the village some compassionate heart kind enough to give you a few drops of the fermented juice of the palm-tree, which will be more efficacious than this water. Ah, father!" she continued, suddenly changing her tone, which assumed a caressing expression, contrasting singularly with the animation which marked her features; "go, father dear, and return speedily, for Buddha would never forgive us if we let death discharge the debt you owe this man."

Argalenka was so profoundly moved when he heard his daughter express herself with so much clearness and sense that he fell on his knees before her, and throwing his arms round the young girl's neck, pressed her to his heart, with transports of happiness which sufficiently indicated what was passing within him.

Arroa disengaged herself impatiently from this embrace, and continued in a harsh voice: "Go, go, old man—go at once."

"I will," replied Argalenka; "and I will bring back the horse, we will place the white man on its back, and will take him to our hut, which shall be his dwelling."

"Yes, yes, father," said Arroa; "but go I implore you." The Beduin rose and hurried away, thanking his god for having twice thrown the European in his path, since the sentiment of a benefit conferred had sufficed to restore his child's reason. As soon as the thickets had closed behind Argalenka, Arroa looked all round

with an appearance of uneasiness. When she was quite certain that no one could either see or hear her, she leaned forwards towards Eusebius's face, took the young man's hands within her own, and pressed them passionately.

She then plucked a purple flower from the coronal of China roses, which was wreathed round her hair, masticated it for a few moments, and, opening Eusebius's vest, placed it upon the spot where she felt his heart still beating in slow and thick pulsations.

At the same moment she began to sing in the same monotonous tone as when her father had found her in the temple on Mount Gagak.

"Thou whom I have pursued so long in my dreams," she said,—"thou, whose image was the sole ray of light which shone upon me in the darkness of night,—thou, for whom I have longed,—thou, to whom my every look appealed—to whom my every sigh was addressed,—thou, who hast made my heart, which knew thee not, throb with tumultuous passion, can I have found thee only to lose thee? Must it be that the spring is dried up at the very moment my lips are about to cool their fever, and before I have slaked the thirst of kisses which consumes them? Thou wishest to depart to the realm of shadows that have fled, the couch thou wilt find there is hard and cold, the rock or the damp earth.

"Remain among the daughters of the earth. Does the flower of the malatti think of closing its leaves before all the breezes which pass across our island have caressed it one by one? Does the bird with its brilliant plumage, and which makes the air the scene of its tenderest caresses, think of staying on the earth so long as a single companion is left to appease the longings of its craving desires?

"Perhaps thou despisest us, without knowing what thou despisest. The goddesses who adorn the temples of Brahma's worshippers are lovely, but they are merely statues; and the women of thy country are stone and marble like them. It is not they who could have taught

thee what love is. Ah! if one of the loving and beloved children of the sun, into whose veins a single ray of the life-giving star shall have passed, should one day initiate thee in those mysteries, thou wilt then despise the delights which the gods promise their elect, and wilt rest satisfied, provided they do but leave thee the kisses whose power thou wilt have learned to appreciate." As she uttered these words, Arroa leaned more closely and lovingly over Eusebius's face, her hair caressing his brow and cheeks. Suddenly, as if yielding to an impulse she was powerless to resist, the Indian pressed her coral lips passionately to the cold and ashy lips of the young foreigner. The effect this kiss produced was immediate. Eusebius's eyes opened suddenly, as if an electrical shock had passed through his frame, and they rested immediately upon the moist orbs, upon the fascinating gaze, upon the trembling lips of the Indian.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ARGALENKA had no difficulty in discovering the hut in which Hurruck had assured him he would find a safe asylum. This hut had been constructed a twelvemonth before by the Gueber himself, as a shelter for some particular object he had then in view.

He had chosen, as a site for his new dwelling, a locality as wild as his tastes and passions; his principal object had been to withdraw himself as much as possible from the vicinity of his fellow-creatures; and with that view he had built his future abode in the most unfrequented part of the province of the Préangers.

With the exception of the village of Baja, situated on the borders of the sea, at a distance of about a league from Hurruck's hut—a village which had been so often laid waste by the incursions of the Malay pirates, that the few families of fishermen who inhabited it had discon-

tinued, as utterly useless, repairing their roofless habitations—there was no other collection of individuals for three or four leagues around.

The hut in question was built upon a slight eminence at about a hundred feet from the river, in the midst of a wood of palms and acacias, some of which had attained colossal dimensions.

Hurruck's cabin, like all those which the natural instincts of the Malays induce them to place beyond the reach of inundations, and safe from the attacks of reptiles and scorpions, was built on two rows of bamboo piles, placed side by side, which raised it eight feet above the ground.

These habitations, accordingly, present a somewhat singular appearance ; for although they have no basement story, they possess a first floor.

The first floor in the present case was reached by an exterior staircase of bamboos, of which the frame-work and walls of the rustic edifice were also composed.

In front of the cabin was a balcony or verandah, over which the outspread palm-leaves formed a kind of roof, sheltering it from the heat of the sun, as well as from the inclemency of the rainy season. Although the space which Hurruck had appropriated for its construction was sufficiently limited, he had contrived, by means of a partition, to separate the first floor into two rooms, which were entered by two separate doors opening upon the balcony.

It will be in this hut that we shall find Eusebius Van den Beck, a few days after the events related in the preceding chapter.

It seemed as if the young Dutchman's presence in this modest abode had a happy influence on those who inhabited it.

A sudden metamorphosis had been wrought in Arroa ; she had certainly not recovered the innocent and artless flow of spirits of former years, prior to her abduction by Doctor Basilius—years the remembrance of which had left a very painful impression upon the Beduin, for he per-

ceived from time to time, upon the face of his child, the return of that sombre, anxious, and sometimes sinister expression of countenance which had characterized her madness—but the madness itself seemed to have disappeared, and the young Indian had apparently recovered the use of her mental faculties, especially when in the presence of Eusebius.

In order sufficiently to understand Argalenka's delight at the sudden and unhoped-for recovery of his daughter, we must revert to what he had suffered when, instead of the sweet, gay, loving, and beautiful girl he had hoped to fold in his arms, he had found a body from which the soul appeared to have taken flight—an inert, cold, silent, and almost dumb creature, whom nothing could raise from her torpor—not even her father's caresses.

When he had quitted Hurruck, and as he wandered through the solitudes, leading the horse which bore the phantom of his beautiful Arroa, the Beduin mused in sorrowful indignation over the idea that that which was almost the breath of life could have withdrawn itself from the flesh of his flesh, the blood of his blood. He would not believe that this mental alienation was without remedy; he had fought against the malady, with that persevering tenderness which a father alone can find in his inexhaustible affection. He endeavoured to awaken sentiments in Arroa's mind; he tried to induce her to admire views which resembled the village of Bantam, where she had passed her childhood. When he came across a flower or a fruit he knew she liked, he offered it to her with words that would have softened the most obdurate heart; but all his endeavours were in vain.

Whenever apparently the young girl listened to what the old man said, her eyes were either fixed and haggard, or else so wandering in their gaze, that it seemed as if her father was speaking to her in an unknown tongue; but, generally speaking, the sound of the Beduin's voice seemed for his daughter nothing more than a noise, to which she considered she must reply by another sound; and she would accordingly begin to sing some strains similar to

those she sang in the temple of Mount Gagak, and invariably with fresh amplification upon the pleasures of love, with words which deeply wounded the heart and religious principles of the old man.

Argalenka's illusions were still further prolonged during the early days of their installation in Hurruck's cabin; but gradually the want of success opened the eyes of the Beduin to the sad and bitter truth.

As they advanced deeper and deeper into the solitudes of the Préangers, the wanderings of Arroa's mind assumed a more serious and alarming character. During the whole day she would remain crouched in the corner of her small room, wrapped in her veils, refusing every kind of nourishment, shunning the daylight, of which the bright glare seemed to hurt her eyes; but, when the sun began to sink beneath the horizon, she would gradually arouse herself from her torpor, and combed and plaited her long raven tresses, which she adorned with flowers, and arranged her toilet with all the coquetry of a woman in eager expectation of the man she loves; and when night closed in, when the valley was wrapped in dark shadows, and when the river, like a silver ribbon, wound its sinuous course through the sombre shadows of the palm-tree forest, until it reached the phosphorescent waters of the ocean, Arroa would step out upon the balcony, and would awaken the stillness of the night with one of her passionate love-songs. As by degrees she became more and more animated, her voice grew thrilling and sonorous, and so completely dominated the confused murmurs of the valley, that it seemed as if Nature herself grew hushed and still to listen to her plaintive song. But soon her passionate accents became wild ravings; she shrieked forth senseless phrases; and poor Argalenka, as he listened to her, felt his hair stand on end, and the blood curdle in his veins. And then, as if she had become a prey to the violent passions she had invoked, she would rush into the woods, like the Bacchantes of Thrace. The old man could see the white garments of the mad girl disappear among the trees, her voice alone, which could still be

heard, indicating the distance she had fled; and the sound of her voice grew gradually more and more indistinct, the breeze wafted back but a few strains of her song; a confused murmur in the air, and then all was silent; and it was not until the morrow that the poor father would find his daughter asleep in one of the corners of the hut, or else crouching behind a bush.

Scenes such as this, of almost daily occurrence, terrified and grieved the unhappy Beduin. Several times he had endeavoured to follow Arroa, afraid that she might become the prey of some wandering beast; but the Indian girl's steps were rapid, her feet scarcely seemed to touch the earth, the grass to bend beneath her tread; she glided like a shadow among the giant creepers which wound the trees and shrubs of Java in their close embrace, through which the old man endeavoured but, in vain, to force a passage.

It was, then, that Argalenka felt all hope die within him.

The Mahometans are the only people who look upon madness in the light of a blessing, and as a state of happiness. The votaries of Buddha regard it as indicating the presence of evil spirits. Argalenka, on comparing his daughter's state with the supernatural events he had seen take place in the palace of Thsermaï, and reflecting on the few words addressed to him by the Gueber, had come to the conclusion that the evil one had taken possession of Arroa; and he wept over her, and passed whole hours in gazing upon her in mute despair and superstitious terror.

The Beduin's grief was so profound, his ideas so confused, that he fancied himself under the influence of Buddha's curse, and dared no longer, therefore, invoke the divinity in which he believed.

It was just at this time that he came across Eusebius.

At the sight of this young man a sudden change had taken place in Arroa; she had spoken, and had shown evident signs of return to reason by the thoughtful care with which she tended Eusebius. The Beduin passed

from a state of excessive grief to a paroxysm of joy,—his child had returned to life.

When Eusebius had been removed to the hut, the Indian girl's recovery became more and more confirmed; she had not regained the playfulness nor the tenderness of her childhood; she was still taciturn and morose; her father was obliged to repeat the same question several times over before he could obtain a reply. But she was assiduous and attentive towards the guest whom Providence had thrown in their way; and the paroxysms, which used almost every evening to terrify the old man, had entirely disappeared.

The reaction which Argalenka experienced was extreme; his happiness was too deep-felt to enable him to control his feelings: he laughed and cried at the same moment when a few words escaped from the lips that had so long been silent. In his delight he would press Arroa to his heart, and then he would quit her to embrace the young stranger, as if he felt uncertain which he ought to love the most—his daughter, or the man to whom he was indebted for her recovery. Argalenka did not try to discover the cause of this unexpected cure, nor did he try to understand it. Few people take the trouble to canvass the working of a miracle by which they are benefited. Argalenka luxuriated in his new-found happiness, which was so great that he did not perceive the change which, in an opposite sense to that of his daughter, had taken place in the young Dutchman.

In fact, notwithstanding his youth and strength, in spite of Arroa's tender solicitude and the Beduin's friendship, Eusebius appeared to be far from recovering from the shock he had received.

His face had become still paler than when Argalenka had found him in a fainting state near the bushes which grew by the sea-shore; his cheeks were hollow, his lips livid; the spark of life which still flickered seemed concentrated in his eyes, which glistened with a strange fire, like that of fever.

These symptoms of some deep moral disturbance were

not merely confined to outward appearances. The stranger's temper was singularly changed. In the days of his greatest trials, when sleep had been chased from his eyelids by the persecutions of Basilius, he had merely been melancholy and indifferent ; but, since his arrival in the Beduin's hut, his temper had become savage and fierce. He was rough and irritable towards his host, whose fostering care and ever prompt attention had been frequently received with harsh words and cold disdain.

Towards Arroa, on the contrary, Eusebius's bearing was humble and submissive, even to meekness and terror. Even without seeing her approach, he knew she was coming towards him ; he shuddered, and his body became bent ; his pallid cheeks flushed faintly ; his lips trembled convulsively, and his teeth chattered ; and when she came to his side, his look followed her every movement with an uneasiness that resembled agony.

Although many days had elapsed since the fatal evening on which he had left Garoët in company with the negress, nothing passed to show that he still remembered what had happened, not a word to indicate that he sometimes thought of Esther and her child. Occasionally, however, he became absorbed in deep meditation ; and his heavy sighs and the altered expression of his face proved that it was not without a severe struggle that his indifference had become so decided.

It was Arroa who had been the cause of this indifference, this marked alteration in Eusebius's mental and physical condition.

He felt a strange, mad passion for the young Indian girl, of which it was as difficult for him to discover the cause as to comprehend the effects.

Since the kiss Arroa had impressed upon his lips, not a smile had once visited them ; and, in spite of his former apprehensions and his recent resolutions, he had either yielded to some supernatural influence, or the plastic beauty of the daughter of Argalenka had sufficed to work this miracle ; and without any premonitory sign, without any indication of change, without a struggle,

Eusebius had resigned himself to the disastrous influence of one whose earnest gaze had exercised so irresistible a a fascination upon him.

The impression of Arroa's vermilion lips had left behind it a sharp painful sensation like the searing of a hot iron. This sensation plunged Eusebius into a kind of helplessness, but still the consciousness remained that he had lately witnessed scenes of which he had hitherto been ignorant, and a firm determination to see them again was uppermost in his mind during the prostration of his senses.

In a short time, suffering more and more from the maddening influence which she exercised over him—she, who during the first few days he had passed in the hut, appeared resolved to confirm it, by not leaving the side of the mat on which he lay stretched—a singular change seemed to be worked in his brain. He felt as if he had hitherto been living under restraint, and that now, for the first time, he was free. Sometimes he would ask himself if Arroa was not the first creature of her sex upon whom he had ever gazed; he could not conceive it possible that beauty could adorn another form than hers which was constantly before him, or passion desire another object.

By degrees, and still under the influence of this hallucination, his memory of the past faded away, just as we lose sight of a landscape in the surrounding mists as we gradually leave it in the distance; then it entirely disappeared from his mind, and his efforts to recall that past were ineffectual. His memory had become rebellious, it refused to restore the deposit which the past had confided to its keeping. Sometimes, he exhausted his strength in this struggle, but all to no purpose.

He generally remained in fixed contemplation of Arroa, absorbed in the happiness of gazing upon her, without a feeling of satiety. But, however violent Eusebius's passion had become, he had never dared to address a word of love to the young Indian girl. His eyes might reveal what was passing in his mind, but his lips were silent; his thoughts, too, had a limit, which chilled him

with terror, and which he would not have dared to express; the folds of the young girl's sarong seemed to him of bronze, and his imagination would have considered it a sacrilege to have attempted to draw them aside. However material the nature of his feeling for her, Eusebius had raised his idol to such an elevation, that he did not think human strength sufficient to reach her. Arroa, on her side, had not renewed the passionate demonstrations which had first riveted her slave to his chains. Her eyes alone, always full of tender promises, whenever she found herself in the presence of the young Dutchman, expressed what appeared to pass in her mind. Like two streams of burning lava, separated from each other by a brazen wall, neither of them appeared sufficiently adventurous to overturn the barriers which obstructed the possibility of a more intimate acquaintance.

And, yet, something strange occurred to Eusebius every night. When wrapped in the deepest slumber, it seemed as if a hot breath passed across his face, and that once more the burning kiss which had had the power of raising him from his swoon upon the occasion of his first meeting with Arroa, was impressed upon his lips.

The effect produced by this dream upon Esther's husband was so violent, that, when he awoke, he asked himself whether it was indeed a dream or a reality. Every morning he arose paler and more fatigued than when he had retired to rest; and yet, at the same time, he longed for the repetition of the wild fancies which so disturbed his sleeping moments.

Eusebius had been about a fortnight under Argalenka's roof, and his strength was failing him so fast that it seemed as if death itself had already marked him for its victim.

Arroa, as if confident of her victory, was less constrained in her actions. She would sometimes leave Eusebius for whole hours together, which she had never done at the commencement of their acquaintance.

The effect which these protracted absences produced upon Eusebius was remarkable. No sooner had the

Indian girl left the neighbourhood of the hut, than what still remained of vitality in the young man seemed to abandon him altogether. He fell into an extreme dejection, sometimes giving way to a despair the cause of which he could not determine, and he called to Arroa with the lamenting cry of a deer braying in the woods.

It was generally towards evening that the young Indian girl made her excursions in the environs. One afternoon, as they were seated together, side by side, beneath the shade of the banana and papaw trees which Hurruck had planted round his hut, a slight noise momentarily distracted Eusebius's attention from the gaze he had bent upon Arroa, and upon again turning his head towards her, he was surprised to find that she was no longer at his side. She had disappeared.

A look of sadness and disappointment overspread his features, and his head sank on his bosom. In the hope of finding her whose presence had become necessary to his existence, he arose, and wandered a few steps away from the hut.

At a little distance from him he heard his name called, and the voice that uttered it he recognized as that of Arroa. He bent his steps in the direction whence the voice seemed to proceed. As he advanced, he heard the summons repeated, except that the sound appeared always to fly before him.

For some time, Eusebius considered it to be a jest of Argalenka's daughter; but he walked so far under this impression, without succeeding in shortening the distance which separated him from her, and was so weak and wearied, that he felt his strength rapidly giving way. In his turn, he then called upon Arroa, and implored her to come to him.

A mocking cry from the Indian girl was the answer he received. She seemed to be retreating to a greater distance than ever.

Eusebius was exhausted; he could go no further. He threw himself on the grass, in order to recover his breath. As his hand touched the earth, he felt beneath his fingers

a cold and polished object. He picked it up, and by the fading light of day, discovered it to be a jewel that belonged to him.

It was an enamelled gold locket, in which he had placed some of his wife's and his child's hair.

This locket was broken, as if some person had been endeavouring to crush it under the heel, or between a couple of stones. However, the relics it contained were not quite lost, for Eusebius found in the metal case some remains of the silky lock of hair which he had, himself, cut from his wife's head.

He asked himself how this trinket, which he usually wore suspended round his neck, should have been found there; and he then remembered that it was the very spot from which Argalenka had carried him when almost expiring, from fatigue. He placed the locket carefully in his bosom.

The mere aspect of this object had caused Eusebius a painful emotion; his heart beat violently, his brain seemed on fire. No sooner did the trinket come into contact with his flesh than he seemed to perceive the image of his Esther rise indistincly before him. The face of his young wife, gazing upon the only being she had ever loved, expressed the tenderest reproach and the profoundest pity. The agony Eusebius suffered increased in intensity; he made a desperate effort to recal the past. The image of his wife grew more distinct, the feeling of existence which appeared to have abandoned him returned in full force: he not only remembered the vows he had exchanged with her to whom he belonged in the sight of God and man, but he also remembered Basilius, as well as the compact which bound him to that demon, and the destiny which awaited him; and then was he able to sound the depth of the gulf into which he had fallen.

He wept bitterly; a dizziness seemed to seize him; he arose and endeavoured to fly.

He had hardly passed the thicket, near to which he had been seated, when a beautifully-formed arm, the very

contact of which made his frame thrill with indefinable sensations, was passed within his own, and checked his sudden flight. At the same moment, a head sunk on his bosom, tresses softly moved by the wind caressed his face, and a trembling voice, approaching his ear, murmured these words:—

"Is it for me to follow you now? and must my voice call you to come to me?"

"Leave me, leave me," exclaimed Eusebius, struggling to disengage himself from her embrace, and turning away so as to avoid seeing Arroa.

"Are you angry because I did not immediately answer you? In the future you shall always be master; you shall find me a slave submissive to your merest wish; your happiness shall be mine, or, rather, our happiness shall be undivided."

"Be silent, Arroa, be silent," exclaimed Eusebius, trembling violently.

"If I fled from you," continued the Indian girl, "it was because I found my reason becoming weaker than my affection. I tried to struggle against it, but, alas! I have been vanquished, and it is sweet to have to confess it to you. Let the world perish—let the mountains of our island be levelled with the plains—let the sea roar and rush like an overwhelming cataract on our own land,—I shall forget all if your arms are around me, the music of your kisses will prevent me hearing the destruction of the universe."

"Arroa, Arroa!" exclaimed Eusebius, in accents of despair, "let me go; I must listen to the voice of reason, of which you speak, duty obliges me——"

"Why do you speak of reason and duty?" replied Arroa, whose voice had become slightly ironical; "is there any duty more imperative than that which bids us love? Does not reason tell us to enjoy the blessings which Buddha has bestowed upon us?"

"But you must know, Arroa, that I am not free; and that the past has ties——"

"The past," replied Arroa, interrupting him again;

"the past is a mere idle phantom, and we are flesh and blood; what matters yesterday or to-morrow if to-day our love renders us monarchs of the world?"

"Oh! for pity's sake be silent, Arroa."

"I can see, now, that you scorn the present that I was so proud and happy to bring to you. The lily of the valley has no charm for you, unless it wears the faded complexion of those who live in great cities. The lily of the field, which vies with it in gold, by the brilliancy of its colour, and whose rich odour perfumes the whole valley, has nothing wherewith to tempt you. Alas! alas! will poor Arroa be condemned, like the flower she resembles, to be plucked by other hands than those of him she loves?"

"How do you mean?" exclaimed Eusebius, whose heart, as his jealousy was aroused, throbbed violently.

"Christian," replied Arroa, "do you not know, that Buddha has said that marriage is the bridge which leads man and woman to heaven. My father, who is a fervent disciple of his law, will not suffer me to infringe it. A rich man of the province of Bantam has asked my hand in marriage, and doubtless—— but no," she exclaimed, as if overwhelmed with the idea, "if Arroa is not yours, no one in the world shall possess her affections. May my sight fade away, if I am no longer to behold you; may my heart break, if it is not to beat for you; may my beauty perish, if you are not to enjoy it."

While speaking thus, Arroa tore her hair, and smote her bosom in real or seeming despair. Eusebius turned round to stay her arm, and found himself face to face with her.

The moon, which had just risen above the horizon, beamed fully on the face of the Indian girl, which it illumined with its soft rays.

She was standing within a few steps of Eusebius; her dishevelled hair—among which the flowers with which she had entwined them in the morning—floated on her shoulders in wavy tresses, like a large velvet mantle. In her violent agitation, she had burst the fastenings of the sandal-wood corset which confined her bust; and her

bosom, beautiful like marble, followed every movement of her convulsive breathing. Her last words had expressed despair, but still it was love which glistened in her eyes; it was passion which was revealed by the eager quivering of her lips.

Eusebius looked at Arroa, and fell at her feet; taking advantage of his excessive agitation, she thrust her hand into his breast, seized the locket which had failed to save her victim, and threw it far away into the brushwood.

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Half the night had passed away, but neither Eusebius nor Arroa had returned to the hut.

Argalenka, seated on the first step of the bamboo staircase, was anxiously awaiting their arrival.

He did not feel uneasy, because he knew they were together. After all the disappointments and trials he had undergone, he luxuriated in the present quiet of his mind; and, absorbed by the charms of the beautiful night, he gazed upon the waving summits of the cocoa-nut-trees agitated by the sea-breeze, with thousands of silvery tints, and listened to the heavy and monotonous beating of the waves against the rocky coast.

At last he saw the young people advancing towards him, arm-in-arm, with their hands clasped lovingly together.

As soon as Eusebius perceived Argalenka, he tried to disengage his arm from Arroa's embrace; but she would not suffer him to do so.

"Father!" she exclaimed, as she stood before the old man, "the stranger said to your daughter, 'Be my betrothed;' and your daughter replied, 'I will; be mine.'"

Upon hearing these words, Eusebius started with surprise; he attempted to speak, but Arroa did not give him time. She pressed his hand more tightly in her grasp, and threw herself caressingly on his breast, against which she had been nestling closely.

"Is it not true?" she asked. "Has the daughter of the Beduin spoken falsely?"

Eusebius was silent.

Argalenka had hitherto preserved an unbroken silence. In his astonishment, he feared it might be a fresh crisis in Arroa's madness.

"The daughter of the Beduin has alone spoken," he said at last. "The stranger has not answered."

"She has spoken the truth," murmured Eusebius, in a voice scarcely audible.

"Daughter," continued Argalenka, after a few moments passed in silent meditation, "the customs and the creed of Christians do not resemble ours. The children of Buddha regard only as faults those things with which their conscience reproaches them; but with the white man a misfortune sometimes becomes a dishonour, and is treated as a crime. Have you told him the history of your past life? has it been penned by the hand of truth, so that if he should, later, regret what he shall have done for you, he will have his own eyes only to accuse, and not the sincerity of your heart."

"I have done so," replied Arroa with assurance.

"And what said the stranger?"

"He said, 'Let the root of the mangrove perish if it fears the briny waters of the ocean; let the crimson fruit of the guava ripen without the rays of the sun; but let not *me* be separated from the caresses of the lovely girl with the velvet eyes."

"And so he persisted in claiming you for his betrothed?"

"Father, you have said it."

"Blessed be the stranger who has not despised the daughter of the poor man!"

And with these words, the old man took a handful of rice, and scattered it alternately upon the heads of Arroa and Eusebius.

"May blessings from above be showered upon you, like this grain, whose emblem it is! May Buddha, who is just, liberal, benevolent, and merciful, watch over you; may the vows you have just exchanged be honourably redeemed by both—by you the husband, and by you the

wife! May Buddha, ever ready to help his faithful worshippers, keep you in abundance and in the knowledge of all that is pure; make you think and speak all that is good, and ever do that which is noble."

Eusebius, pale, speechless, and immovable, paid little or no attention to the words of the Beduin. Arroa had once more resumed her magical influences over the young Dutchman's mind. A few hours had sufficed to increase a hundredfold the young Indian girl's empire over one whose adoration for her bordered on insanity.

While Argalenka was concluding his invocation, the two young people, who were facing the hut, saw a shadow pass across the bamboos which formed the exterior wall of the building.

They shuddered and simultaneously uttered a loud cry.

Argalenka, on turning round, also saw the shadow, but only as it disappeared in the thicket of bananas which formed a green belt around the dwelling.

"Who goes there?" he called out. No one answered him. Both he and Eusebius sprang forward; the large leaves of the tress were still agitated, from the impulse they had received, and at the same moment, at a few paces from where they were standing, an animal, black as ebony, and whose eyes glistened in the darkness, sprang into the glade, and the roar of a wild beast made the foliage of the surrounding trees tremble on their branches.

Terrified by the close vicinity of the animal, Eusebius, Arroa, and Argalenka returned, all three, into the hut, and the joy of the old man was changed to sadness, for it was an evil omen.

CHAPTER XXX.

When Esther Van den Beck awoke, at daybreak on the morning of her husband's expedition with the poor negress, she was much surprised not to find Eusebius by her side; she imagined that he had availed himself of the freshness of the morning to take a walk in the neighbourhood. She called to Cora to bring the child to her; but no Cora answered; her other women who entered their mistress's room, informed her that Cora was not in the inn, and that the mat upon which she was to have slept had not been touched.

Although Esther's astonishment was very great, her suspicions were by no means awakened; it never occurred to her to establish any connection between the disappearance of Cora and the early walk of her husband.

However, hour after hour passed away, and neither Eusebius nor the black nurse reappeared at Garoët. Esther, a prey to the intensest anxiety, went to the governor of the district, but he, being ill, was unable to see her; a short time afterwards, however, a Malay presented himself at the inn where Madame Van den Beck was staying, and told her, that provided he was paid for his trouble, he would undertake any search she was desirous of having made in the neighbourhood.

Esther consented to everything he asked, and shortly afterwards she saw him pass under the windows at the head of a troop of native horsemen, well armed, who proceeded at full gallop in the direction of the mountain.

Esther was full of hope. She thought it very probable that M. Van den Beck and the negress had lost their way in the wild forests at the foot of the Taïkoekoe mountain. The Malay had given himself out as so thoroughly ac-

quainted with the district, that it was impossible that the trace of an European should escape his practised eye.

He returned very late at night, and informed Esther, who had awaited his return with an anxiety easily understood, that his searches had proved entirely useless; he intimated that the white man and the African woman had very probably become the prey of one of the tigers or reptiles abounding in the woods.

A thunderbolt falling at Esther's feet could hardly have caused her a greater shock than this suggestion: she turned pale, and would have fallen to the ground had not one of her women caught her in her arms. The Malay was about to avail himself of her prostration to leave the house, when, drawing fresh courage from her despair, she threw herself at the Malay's feet, and entreated him, with flowing tears and passionate entreaties, to renew his search on the following day.

Upon seeing Madame Van den Beck so overcome with distress, the face of the Malay lighted up with a sardonic smile, and he coldly answered Esther, that any farther efforts would be useless, as he was certain he should be no more successful on the morrow, and that his own private affairs imperatively required him at some distance from Garoët; that she could apply to some one else—but he warned her, that as he had failed, it was useless to think that others would succeed; and turning away, he left her plunged in the deepest despair.

From the nature of Madame Van den Beck's affection for her husband, it was not likely she would readily give up her researches. She sent out the peasants and hunters of the neighbouring districts: they organized exploring parties and ransacked every bush and thicket within a wide circuit; but, as the Malay had predicted, after scouring plain and mountain for many days, they returned unsuccessful.

Esther felt crushed and overwhelmed by her misfortune; but there is in sincere affection a tenacity that nothing can discourage. The men had been unable to find any trace of a struggle, or the torn and tattered

remnants of human attire, or any vestige of human bones; she remained, therefore, firm in her conviction that her husband had not perished in that way; she persisted in continuing the search, when the governor of the district called upon her.

After a few preliminary expressions of sympathy for her misfortunes, he asked her for the particulars of her husband's disappearance; but, at the first words she uttered respecting the Malay, the countenance of the magistrate manifested the greatest surprise, and he pressed Esther with numerous questions with regard to the man's bearing, and look, and costume; and he finished by assuring her positively that he had no knowledge of the man, and, moreover, that he had never sent him to her. He then stated that he coincided in her opinion as to the improbability of Eusebius or the nurse having been destroyed by tigers, or having become the prey of a boa constrictor; at the same time he confessed that he did not think their condition was much better, for to all appearance M. Van den Beck and his slave Cora must have been kidnapped by pirates.

It was upon the following circumstances that he based this opinion:—A few days before the disappearance of Eusebius, a party of pirates had effected a daring descent in the village of Bantam; they had penetrated far enough into the interior to succeed in burning, pillaging, and laying waste the palace of the Rajah Thsermaï, one of the most considerable personages in the island of Java.

A circumstance which seemed to corroborate this supposition was, that Malay vessels had been signalled, the evening before the arrival of Eusebius at Garoët, cruising about Cape Mandjora, which is not more than ten miles from Taïkoekoe; and the description of the pirate chief, answering to that of the Malay who had presented himself to Madame Van den Beck, made it more certain. By making the search himself, he had given his men time to gain the high seas, or one of their ports of refuge, with their prey.

He added, that in all probability they had but one end

in view in kidnapping the rich merchant of Holland, namely, to set a ransom upon his head; he advised Madame Van den Beck to return immediately to the capital of the island, where it would be easier for her to collect the price for which the pirates would set her husband at liberty, or to send out the cruisers of the Company in their pursuit.

Esther felt very unwilling to leave Garoët—it seemed as if she would be removing farther from her husband; she represented that if the pirates were to send a messenger to her, they would naturally go to the spot where their chief had left her; and she was afraid that, in the event of the messenger not finding her at Garoët, the deliverance of Eusebius, for whom she was ready to sacrifice all her fortune, would be delayed, and her husband's days consequently imperilled.

To induce her to leave, the governor confided to her that a residence in that district, so far from the metropolis, was not a safe asylum for her at that moment; indistinct rumours were circulating among the natives, mysterious envoys had appeared in the province of Préangers, and were spreading ideas of revolt and independence among all classes of the population; during the night large fires had been lighted upon the mountains, and there was no doubt that the conspirators had held several meetings in the forest situated in the centre of the island. The Java chiefs had shown an insolent and imperious bearing towards the Europeans; everything seemed to indicate an approaching insurrection; in remaining at Garoët, Esther would expose herself to all these dangers.

At that moment the poor woman did not attach much value to her own existence; but then she reflected that Eusebius's life was bound up with her own,—that if she were to die, no one would deliver him; she then thought of her child, and determined to follow the advice of the governor by setting off on the morrow.

Notwithstanding the impatience with which she urged

the muleteers, who took her across the Panderango, to make greater speed, it was not until the evening of the third day that she reached the neighbourhood of Batavia. She had been eighteen days separated from Eusebius.

On approaching the capital of the island, Madame Van den Beck could plainly perceive that the apprehensions communicated to her by the Governor of Garoët, were shared in the metropolis: pickets of mounted troops scoured the country, and several times Esther's carriage had come across patrols of militia. The driver having questioned a passer-by, Eusebius's wife heard him tell the servant, that, during the last several days, the environs of Batavia had been ravaged by fire, and that even several houses in Weltevreden itself had not escaped a similar visitation, and which could only be attributed to malicious feelings.

It was not the unusual activity displayed by the troops that alone indicated the uneasiness of the goverment, for after passing some of the more remote houses of the suburbs, Madame Van den Beck observed that the alarm had even reached the population generally; the inhabitants were collected in groups in front of the houses; the Government Square had lost the usual gay and lively appearance it bore of an evening; the carriages were few and far between; and, as if by way of contrast, the square itself was filled with colonists, anxiously discussing the events they seemed to fear, asking eagerly for the latest intelligence, and communicating that which they had received; anxiety was depicted upon every one's face,—symptoms of revolt seemed to have infected the air.

The night was too far advanced for Esther, who knew M. Maës's methodical habits, to call upon him as she intended, and to ask his advice and assistance under the present circumstances. She went home, and retired to her own room, to prepare for the fatigue which she saw she would have to undergo on the morrow, by taking a little rest beforehand; but when she found herself

in the house so full of associations connected with her husband, the wounds of the poor woman seemed to open afresh, her grief became more bitter than ever, and her tears flowed in torrents.

It was not until nearly two in the morning that she was enabled to get any rest.

She had scarcely been half an hour asleep, when she was suddenly awakened by loud cries in the house.

Esther arose in the greatest consternation and ran to the window, which she threw open.

In their colonies the Dutch have grafted their own manners and tastes upon the luxurious habits peculiar to the East. Their architecture indicated recollections of the mother country; the mansions in Weltevreden were huge stately piles of building, and, by carrying out upon a larger scale the dimensions and proportions of the buildings which had been adopted as their models, the singular aspect of the buildings peculiar to the United Provinces may be conceived.

There are precisely the same tesselated brick pavements; the same gardens in regular squares, with flowers arranged in the well-known formal Dutch style, with the difference only that at Batavia the tesselated bricks sometimes cover a surface of several hundred yards; the gardens are parks, and, instead of hyacinths, tulips, and anemones, all the flowers of the tropics bloom luxuriantly in the flower-gardens of Java.

The residence of Eusebius Van den Beck consisted of an immense pile of building, approached by a garden. Behind this building, in a yard planted with trees, were the stables, coach-houses, and domestic offices. The whole was situated at the corner of a street.

Upon opening her window, Madame Van den Beck saw a man scaling the wall of the enclosure facing her. She uttered a piercing shriek.

On hearing the shriek the man advanced rapidly towards her, and with a light bound sprang across a bed of purple rhododendrons. Esther, on seeing him approach, attempted to make her escape, and take refuge in her

own room ; but before she could move a single step, the intruder had seized her by the arm.

"Had it not been for the man who now speaks to you, your child would never have seen the light," he exclaimed, in a deep hoarse voice ; "will the mother then deliver him up to his pursuers ?"

As he finished speaking, and before Esther in her agitation could prevent him, the man, with marvellous agility, climbed up the ledge of the window and sprang into the room ; and it was only then that, by the light of the night-lamp which illumined the room, Madame Van den Beck recognized the Gueber, whose prescriptions had so miraculously brought her through her illness.

"What is the matter ? What do you want ? What is it I can do ?" she exclaimed in her astonishment.

"Too many questions for me to answer," replied Hurruck ; "my tongue is as tired as my legs. I am pursued, and if I am taken I am a dead man. Do you wish me to die, or to live ?—speak !"

"But what, in Heaven's name, have you done, what crime have you committed ?"

"When the tiger leaves his jungle in the daytime, it is the chattering of the jackdaws and sparrows that follow him as they hop from tree to tree, which puts the hunter on his scent. I will not wait until your voice reveals my retreat to those who are hastening on my track ; I will deliver myself up to them ; I shall thus save you from a crime, and myself from a debt of gratitude difficult to bear."

Esther made a movement as if to stay Hurruck, and seized him by his tattered raiment.

"Gueber," she said to him, "my religion, like your own, commands those who profess it never to forget a service rendered ; you are quite safe in the house into which you have so lately brought joy."

"The word of the women of your people resembles the juice of the white madder when it issues from the shrub that produces it ; the mere breath of a child across the vessel in which it is contained is sufficient to give it the

colour of blood. If you wish me to believe you, swear it by him whose absence you are now bewailing—swear it by him in whose little features you trace a likeness to the man who has abandoned you."

As he uttered these last words, Hurruck pointed with his finger to the cradle in which slumbered Esther's son. One word only of what the Gueber had just said seemed to have struck Madame Van den Beck.

"Abandoned!" she exclaimed; "abandoned, did you say?"

At that moment a violent knocking shook the outer door of the house. Esther hurriedly took the oath Hurruck required, and quickly hid him behind the tapestry hangings.

It was time: the folds of the tapestry were still agitated, when, before the servants had time to answer the summons of the nocturnal visitors, the door gave way under the violent and repeated blows, and a troop of armed men rushed into the garden.

"The incendiary! the incendiary! death to the incendiary!" shouted the intruders, who were followed by a gigantic personage, evidently in command, who was puffing and blowing prodigiously, and was vainly endeavouring to calm their excitement.

"Gently, sirs, gently!" exclaimed this personage, who over his white cotton attire carried a perfect armoury of every kind of offensive and defensive weapons,—swords, pistols, daggers, and blunderbusses, which made him resemble a peripatetic arsenal; "gently," he cried, "ten thousand devils! in putting down one misdemeanour you go and commit another; you violate a citizen's house by breaking into it, which is a statutable offence, according to the code of the colony. That citizen is my client, which is an aggravation of your offence, and deserves——" M. Maës did not finish the sentence, as he seemed to think that doubt in a criminal matter was very desirable to hold over the heads of wrongdoers. "In fact," he continued, in a voice that grew louder and louder, "you have paid no attention to the orders, nay, more than

that, you have paid no attention to the prayers, of your commanding officer. Are you aware, gentlemen, that militia courts-martial have dealt very severely with persons who have conducted themselves with far less impropriety than you have?"

Unhappily for the effect of M. Maës's peroration, it was interrupted by Madame Van den Beck.

"M. Maës, M. Maës!" she exclaimed, "come to me."

At the sound of this feminine voice, a sudden change took place in the authoritative attitude of the leader of the patrol: with his right hand he endeavoured to replace in its scabbard the menacing weapon which he brandished over his head, while, with his left hand, which he passed across his right, he took hold of his hat, which was ornamented with an immense cockade of the Dutch colours, and made it describe a most graceful curve.

The notary attempted to approach Esther, but he exerted himself ineffectually in the execution of the former of the two manœuvres just referred to; the sheath obstinately resisted the attempts made to introduce the sword into it.

"Why don't you assist me, stupids?" exclaimed the notary, addressing himself to the militia-men in general. One of them, a good-natured fellow, regarding himself as the individual for whom this appeal was intended, took the point of the sword between his fingers, placed it in the scabbard, and the sword slipped into it as if by enchantment, and M. Maës, relieved from all anxiety on the subject, was enabled to approach the person who had appealed to him, assuming, at the same time, an air of the most gallant bearing.

It was only when he approached the window that he distinguished Esther's features.

"What, you at Weltevreden!" he exclaimed in astonishment; "how long have you been here?"

Madame Van den Beck was about to reply, when one of the militia-men advanced, and roughly interrupted her:—

"If you were at your window," he said, "you must

have seen the man we are in search of getting over your garden wall, exactly opposite to where you are now standing."

Esther hesitated replying ; but M. Maës saved her the embarrassment of a falsehood, by violently exclaiming:—

"Ten thousand devils ! The honourable corps of militia-men, which goes to the expense of having a sergeant to instruct them in manual exercise, ought really to add a professor of common civility. What ! a pretty woman condescends to converse with your commandant, and you must needs thrust yourself between them, like a badly-brought-up Mexican hog in a field of maize. At the next meeting of the council I shall propose that the penalty of the lash be applied for your abominable interference. However, I will soon get rid of this confounded pack, by requesting Madame Van den Beck to allow you to search her garden. It is there, if at all, that you will find the individual whom you pretend you saw throw firebrands into the buildings adjoining this house ; unless, indeed, your brains have become muddled by a mixture of tafia, arrack, and fright."

Madame Van den Beck consented immediately to M. Maës proposition, and the militia-men dispersed themselves all over the garden ; but the sound of loud shrieks soon brought them together again.

These cries issued from the back of the house, and proceeded from Madame Van den Beck's servants. They showed clearly enough that it was no false alarm that had been raised, for a fire broke out in the outhouses, one of the gables of which looked out upon the exterior wall of the house.

M. Maës valiantly drew his sword : he declared that he would go and do battle with the fiery element, in the same tone that a paladin informs his lady that he is going to win, or die for her ; and added, that as he had some important communications to make to Madame Van den Beck, he would return to her in a few minutes. After the departure of M. Maës and the militia-men, who had rushed to the side of the courtyard where the danger had

made its appearance, the garden remained for a few minutes quite deserted.

Esther, afraid that her women, in entering her room, or that M. Maës in returning, as he had intimated, might discover Hurruck, resolved to take advantage of the confusion which prevailed in the house and in the streets, to save him.

She hastened to draw aside the tapestry, and found the Gueber where she had left him ; he appeared calm, even indifferent to the fate that awaited him.

"Fly !" said Esther to him ; "listen to the beating of the drum which echoes in the streets ; in a few minutes, perhaps, the garden will be full of people, attracted here by the fire ; it will then be impossible for me to save you."

"Do you know who kindled this fire," asked Hurruck.

"I do not wish to know. Leave this house, convinced that a Christian can keep an oath as well as an idolater ; and let your conscience judge between yourself and me."

Hurruck's face assumed a sullen and morose expression : it seemed as if this proof of greatness of mind had aroused his anger.

"Go !" continued Esther, "and if you think you owe me any return——"

"Ah ! you wish to place a price on the benefit you have conferred," exclaimed Hurruck.

"No, no," replied Esther, "I must try and stifle the anguish of mind which is killing me ; for you cannot understand the sorrow of a poor creature—a wife and mother, who weeps for the only being in this world she loves. Fly,—fly !"

"Woman," replied the Gueber, "do not be too hasty in condemning the man of whom you speak ; let Ormuzd judge between you and him. You shall learn what you wish to know ;—your husband is alive."

"Alive ! alive ! Ah ! you are not deceiving me ?"

"He lives, I tell you, but he tramples under foot the vows he swore to keep ; he lavishes on another woman the love to which no one but yourself is entitled."

"What does that matter to me?" exclaimed Esther excitedly; "he is alive. Heaven and my affection for him will do the rest. Do you want gold? you shall have all I possess if you lead me to him."

Hurruck hesitated a moment; and then with a violent and sinister expression, giving Esther to understand that it would be useless to insist, he said, "No."

He then sprang towards the window through which he had entered, cleared it at a bound, managed to mingle among the crowd of workpeople who were hastening from all sides without being observed, and disappeared from Esther's gaze.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE alarm did not last long; the efforts made to extinguish the fire were of so vigorous a character that no time was afforded it to make much progress, and it was got under almost as soon as it broke out; by degrees the garden of M. Van den Beck's house became clear; and M. Maës, in person, very shortly afterwards came to inform Esther that all was over.

The burly notary's face, when he entered Esther's room, was a dark purple colour; his white overcoat, splashed with mud and dripping wet, was a sufficient indication of the active part he had taken in saving the house. He was quite out of breath, and fell into, rather than sat down upon, a chair, and began fanning himself with his hat; while Madame Van den Beck, anxious to hear the intelligence he had promised to communicate to her, and supposing it referred to her husband, pressed him to explain himself.

"Ah! for pity's sake, dear lady," he exclaimed, "allow me to get my breath, and to rid myself of this accursed harness which is suffocating me. I wish the devil would take these confounded natives," he continued, throwing

one of the pistols which adorned his belt with such violence upon the floor as to startle Esther and her women, who, after Hurruck's departure, had taken refuge in her apartment. "Do not be afraid, madam," continued the notary, who had remarked the movement; "they are not loaded, they are merely fancy articles, like the bags our lawyers carry into court. But are you aware, madam, that these devils incarnate oblige us to carry on the disagreeable calling of night watchmen, under some unaccountable pretext or other of patriotism and Javanese independence. What do they want? what do they expect?"

Esther thought it would be best to let the corpulent notary give vent to his anger before alluding to the subject which interested her so vitally.

Esther addressed a few questions to M. Maës respecting the state and political situation of Weltevreden; and the latter, somewhat more communicative than the governor of Garoët had been, informed Madame Van den Beck that for some time past the colonial government had had reason to suspect the genuineness of the resignation with which the Javanese submitted to a foreign yoke. An anonymous denunciation had corroborated these doubts; the reports of the agents from the interior of the island had confirmed them; the Malay Noungal, the Rajah Thsermaï, and the Chinese Tikoï, were designated as being at the head of a conspiracy to exterminate the Europeans and to restore the native princes. They had succeeded in arresting the Chinese, who, with the weakness and cowardice peculiar to the people of his nation, had made certain confessions, which were represented to be most serious; but with regard to the Malay, and the Javanese prince, one kept to the sea, and the other to the mountains; and it was feared that unless they were arrested, the projected insurrection would be carried out.

Whatever interest this news might have had for others, Madame Van den Beck listened to it very impatiently.

"And have you any news of my husband?" asked the young wife, when the notary, by way of peroration, had added an imprecation to his recital.

M. Maës looked in a significant manner at his client, to indicate the presence of the negresses, and Esther hastened to dismiss them.

"Madam," exclaimed M. Maës excitedly, as soon as the last of the women had disappeared,—"madam, it hurts my feelings to speak ill of a man who has been so good a client as your husband; in the ordinary discharge of my professional duties, I should not think of making such an assertion, but in my present garb of liberty and freedom, I think I have the right to say that your uncle Basilius was a horrid scoundrel."

"For pity's sake, M. Maës, do speak to me of Eusebius."

"A real scoundrel, madam — I will not retract my words; there is no good in enriching a person, if it only be for the purpose of ruining him afterwards. He might assert, I admit, they were only three, and that he had left the world sufficiently peopled with young ladies of that description; but that don't matter; the attraction of forbidden fruit, mere accident——In a word, madam," continued M. Maës, who was getting confused in his speech, "I think your husband's conduct may be extenuated. In his place, in his situation, even *I* myself might have been no wiser than he was."

"Really," M. Maës, exclaimed Esther, "I do not understand you."

"Deuce take it!" replied the notary, in greater confusion than ever; "I am afraid that the communication I have to make will require more tact and delicacy than—— I think, Madame Van den Beck," he added, suddenly starting up, "you had better come to my office to-morrow; perhaps my white cravat may inspire me with sufficient courage."

"Oh! sir," said Esther, clasping her hands in a supplicating manner, "for the last fortnight I have been suffering terribly; for the last fortnight I have been

waiting for one word of hope, and surely you are the last person to wish me to pass another night of suspense."

M. Maës resumed his seat, began playing with the ends of his neckerchief, coughed loudly several times, shut his large eyes, as if he wished to save himself from witnessing the effect his communication would produce, and then with a grave voice said,—

"It is about the codicil, madam."

"The codicil!"

"Alas! yes, the codicil," continued the notary, in the most doleful tone: "I consented, for once in a way, to help M. Van den Beck to hide from you the first breach made in his fortune; but in spite of the sort of fellow-feeling I naturally have, I can't do so again; for six hundred thousand florins have already been squandered through one of those jades mentioned in the codicil of that absurd fellow Basilius."

"Well, M. Maës," said Esther, whose emotion betrayed itself more by the sorrowful expression of her countenance than by the tone of her voice,—"well, M. Maës, we must pay."

"Pay!" exclaimed the notary, bounding from his chair; "ah! madam, allow me to admire your indulgence and resignation: Heaven grant that such a shining example of those two virtues may prove beneficial to the worthy Madame Maës! . . . . Pay! excuse me, madam, but you are going a little too fast. When I handed over the six hundred thousand florins for that good-for-nothing little Frieslander girl, when it was applied for on her behalf, I had your husband's authority; but this time I have seen no one but a seafaring-looking fellow, who has more the appearance of a pirate than anything else, and who, on informing me that the second event provided for by the codicil had taken place, merely brought me, in proof of his assertion, this silver ring, which certainly bears your own and your husband's names; but this is hardly sufficient to constitute a proper title."

As he said this, M. Maës drew from his waistcoat pocket a small silver ring, which he handed to Esther.

The latter took it from the notary, and gazed at it attentively.

It was the ring she had given to Eusebius on the occasion of their betrothal,—a simple pledge which recalled to her their affection and poverty at that time: she had a similar one on her own finger.

She pressed the one the notary had given her to her lips, and two large tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

M. Maës blew his nose violently, and began to exhibit an emotion which did not accord with his character of a light-hearted companion, or with his professional dignity.

"In sober truth," he exclaimed, in the tone of a convinced moralist, "we scamps are sometimes too bad! But to return to the subject under discussion: I told you, madam, that you would be wrong to put too much faith in appearances: perhaps they are trying to dupe us; perhaps your husband is as innocent as your humble servant."

"We must pay," said Esther, with an accent of quiet resignation. "I should be speaking untruly if I were to tell you that the revelations I have just heard have not grieved me extremely; but, believe me, M. Maës, I do not feel the slightest regret at losing that portion of my uncle Basilius's inheritance. I shall be delighted to give it up, if I can in that way ensure the peace and happiness of my beloved Eusebius. I repeat, therefore, give the sum to the person who applies for it; I only wish to keep this ring."

"If I were in your place, before I decided I would wait until I saw M. Van den Beck again."

"See Eusebius again! is it possible?" exclaimed Esther, passing from a state of grief to an extreme agitation: "they have not deceived me, then; he is still alive?"

"I hope so, indeed. Do you think the pirates feed the sharks with florins? Try and take my view of the matter—that your husband, in their eyes, represents an enormous ransom,—and you will feel as confident as I do myself that he is overwhelmed with the most particular attentions from those who have him in their custody.

People do say that on board their luggers these pirates have all kinds of extraordinary amusements; and, I assure you, I should have no objection whatever to be in M. Van den Beck's place."

"But," exclaimed Esther, who appeared to bear the notary's digressions very impatiently, "has the amount been fixed? We must at once see about getting the sum together."

"Calm yourself, madam, and listen to me. The ransom has not yet been fixed; but it will not be long before we shall be told its amount. I had just left Tikoï, for the fat Chinaman was not then under lock and key; he informed me of the public rumour, which spoke of M. Van den Beck being in the hands of the pirates. I returned home very much agitated, when one of my clerks handed me a piece of parchment which he found under the door of the office. This parchment I sent on to you at Garoët, thinking you were still there. This, however, was the substance of it:—'Let Madame Van den Beck be on the watch the evening after her arrival at Batavia; let her follow, alone, the man who will knock three times at the door of her house; her husband's life depends on her courage and resolution.'"

"The night following my arrival at Weltevreden?"

"Yes; that is to say, this very evening: and they cannot blame you for not having followed the directions contained in that mysterious writing. But the pirates have proved less punctual than you; in a few hours daylight will appear, and you have had no communication from them."

At that very moment, and as if some one had been waiting until the notary had finished speaking, a stone, thrown through one of the panes of glass in the window, passed within a short distance of M. Maës's face, and fell on the mats which covered the floor.

Esther stooped down and picked up the stone, which was wrapped in a small strip of parchment, upon which was written "*Antgol.*"

"Antgol! What does that mean?" asked Esther.

"It is a village built at the back of the storehouses of Batavia; your uncle Basilius's residence was situated on land belonging to that village."

"But what has this village to do with the pirates?"

"Perhaps it means that on going to Antgol you will there find the person who is expecting you."

Madame Van den Beck immediately caught up a mantle and threw it across her shoulders.

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to Antgol," Esther replied simply.

"You surely can't think of such a thing; Antgol is close to the seaside, and within reach of the vessels of those infernal scoundrels; it is perhaps a snare they have laid for you."

"But it may, perhaps, be the saving of Eusebius, and so I must not hesitate; at all events, if I am made a prisoner I shall be near him to share his fate and alleviate its bitterness."

M. Maës raised his arms to heaven with a mingled look of admiration and stupor.

"Allow me, then, to go to the guard-house; my brave comrades will accompany me, and with their assistance we shall be able to seize the emissary of these daring rascals, and perhaps a few pirates as well; and when we have them safely, the honourable Company will easily know how to insure your husband's safety without your risking your own life."

"Pray don't do anything of the kind, for you might endanger his."

"At least, you will allow me to accompany you?"

"As far as within a hundred yards of the village of Antgol, you can, but not beyond; you have yourself told me, M. Maës, that those who called me required that I should go alone. I have too much to expect from their goodwill to act contrary to their orders."

"But this is sheer madness!" exclaimed M. Maës, picking up one by one the different samples of a gunsmith's shop with which he had provided himself.

"No, M. Maës; it is prudence. After what I have

heard about the habits and morals of those whom you call pirates, the government—supposing for a moment that it thought the deliverance of a private individual was worth the trouble of arming its fleet—would be powerless to impose its will upon robbers who cover the seas with their vessels, and find sure harbours of refuge in the thousand reefs of the Indian Ocean. My obedience can alone disarm our enemies. What can they ask me that I shall not be ready and willing to give up, to snatch Eusebius from their grasp? My property—I will offer it to them myself; and as for my life, my compliance now is alone sufficient to prove that I am ready to make the sacrifice."

Astonished at this display of generous devotion and energetic will, M. Maës bowed his head and offered no reply.

"And now, M. Maës," continued Madame Van den Beck, "if you intend to be kind enough to act as my guide as far as Antgol, will you get ready to go with me. I only ask for time to embrace my poor child, and then we will start."

Esther then bent over the cradle in which the innocent babe slept. The thought that it would perhaps be the last time she would kiss this sweet proof of her affection for Eusebius, triumphed over her courage; the weakness of the woman and the tenderness of the mother returned; hollow and inarticulate sobs escaped from her heaving bosom, and the tears fell in burning drops upon the face of the child. She held out her arms to press it to her bosom, but had still strength enough to reflect that, unable to check her transports, she might awake the poor little thing from its slumbers. She had courage enough to submit to this sacrifice of her tenderness. She slightly pressed her lips on her child's forehead, summoned the nurses, confided her treasure to their care, and rushed out of the house without looking behind her.

M. Maës followed her; but Esther walked so rapidly that he was obliged to run; and had she not found it necessary to stop to ask him the road, he would have been out-distanced after the first few steps.

They crossed the Place de Waterloo, followed the Rue de Rystevelden, and came out upon a road which was the nearest and most direct route to Antgol. On their way thither, and out of breath with his exertions to keep up with Madame Van den Beck, M. Maës tried again very earnestly to dissuade her from carrying out her resolution. The only reply she made was to confide her child to his care, and to tell him what her wishes were in the event of neither Eusebius nor herself returning.

They walked on thus for nearly a quarter of an hour, when the sound of the waves rolling on the beach became more distinct.

It was not long before they perceived the minaret of the mosque at Antgol, whose black outline was thrown forward on a background of the sky, which was beginning to assume towards the east an orange-grey tint.

They had arrived at the end of their journey. Madame Van den Beck turned towards her companion and said, resolutely,—

"We must part here, M. Maës. Accept my thanks for your kind sympathy, and also for the trouble you have taken in accompanying me here."

"Leave you! May I never drink anything but water if I do so!" exclaimed M. Maës. "You do not know the man you are speaking to, if you think he would abandon a woman placed as you are. It might perhaps be the act of a notary, even if the lady were his client; but it is a proposition that should never be made to a friend."

"M. Maës, I implore you, do not render unavailing a devotion for which a short time ago you expressed a greater admiration than it merited."

Madame Van den Beck was interrupted by the sound of footsteps on the roadway. Both she and her companion bent their gaze in the direction whence the sound proceeded, and perceived a white form issuing from the shade on the side nearest Antgol.

"Who goes there?" exclaimed the notary, without

paying the slightest attention to the entreaties of his companion.

The form did not reply, but continued to advance.

M. Maës drew his scimitar with his right hand, whilst with his left he took a pistol from his belt, with as much resolution as if it contained all the bolts of Jupiter.

"Do not advance another step until you have answered me!" he exclaimed. "This lady is Madame Van den Beck, whose husband is withheld by pirates. I am M. Maës, notary-royal, her adviser and friend. It is now your turn, comrade, to tell us your name, and inform us as to your intentions."

At Esther's name the stranger stopped suddenly.

"'Let her come," he exclaimed in Dutch, but with a very strong Javanese accent.

Madame Van den Beck made a step forward; but M. Maës stopped her by seizing her arm, compelling her to remain by his side.

"Forgive me, my dear sir," he continued; "but people don't carry off Dutch ladies in Batavia in the easy way they do their husbands in the solitudes of Taïkoekoe. This lady is ready to go where you wish to take her; but she trusts you will accept, as a third party, the companionship of your humble servant, who, although he is not quite so charming a personage as the lady you have come to fetch, will be none the less grateful for the honour you wish to show her."

"Impossible!" replied the unknown, in an abrupt tone of voice; "turn back."

"A thousand firebrands!" exclaimed M. Maës with a loud burst of laughter. "You don't know me, my dear sir; I am as obstinate as ten mules. I have taken it into my head to pay the pirates a visit, and am quite disposed to force my society upon you."

M. Maës thereupon left Esther, whom he recommended to move out of the way, seized his pistol by the muzzle, so as to answer the purpose of a cudgel, brandished his sabre, and rushed towards his adversary with an im-

petuosity which proved that the worthy notary had a sufficient amount of irascibility to constitute a hero.

The unknown appeared quite ready to receive him; but when M. Maës arrived within a dozen paces of him a kind of whitish mist appeared between them, and fell over the head of the notary, who, seized round the throat by a powerful slipknot, uttered an inarticulate groan, and fell in a heap upon the ground.

The unknown had thrown over the notary's head a light net, like that which in ancient times was used by the Retiarii to attack the Gauls, and the tradition of which has been handed down by the Parsees to a few tribes of India and Malaysia.

As soon as his foe was on the ground the stranger threw himself upon him, and Esther saw by the light of the dawning day the reflection of the blade of a dagger.

"Spare him, spare him!" she cried, in a voice of anguish. "Do not stain with blood the first step that I make with you, if you wish me to follow you with confidence."

The man hesitated; he seemed to find it difficult to overcome his sanguinary instincts. "Be it so," he exclaimed, after a pause. "I will grant the blue-eyed one's prayer."

He then placed his creese between his teeth, and leaving the notary's head imprisoned in the network which held it fast, he proceeded to tie his feet and hands with the cord which he had used to throw the formidable net. M. Maës made a powerful but ineffectual resistance, and in a few moments it was impossible for him to move.

The man then lifted him up, carried him to the other side of the road, and let him fall into a ditch which was always full of water, the drainings from the marsh-land, and which extended from one end of the Antgol road to the other.

"Remain there until daylight," exclaimed the vanquisher of the unhappy notary, "and thank your countrywoman; for had it not been for her, I should have taken a very different kind of vengeance for the insults lavished

on me at Meester Cornelis's, for which I promised I would punish you."

"Thsermaï!" exclaimed M. Maës, recognizing at these last words the rajah, whose features he had not hitherto been able to distinguish. "Take care, Madame Van den Beck; that man is a traitor, a price is set on his head; don't place any confidence in him, for he is the most cunning rascal I know."

But Esther could not hear him, for the folds of the meshes of the net stifled M. Maës's voice; and, besides, Thsermaï had seized Esther's hand, and was dragging her rapidly towards the village.

At about thirty paces from the first house he leaped across the ditch, held out his hand to Madame Van den Beck and motioned to her that she must cross it.

Esther hesitated. After what had passed between M. Maës and this stranger she hardly knew what to do.

Thsermaï observed her hesitation. "You are free to follow me, madam, or free to turn back; but if you decide on this last course, you will only have yourself to reproach for the tears you may shed."

This direct menace, disguised under an air of extreme courtesy, overcame Esther's objections. She accepted the assistance of the Javanese, who lifted her across to the other side of the ditch. They found themselves opposite a dense grove of tamarind-trees, whose flexible branches and soft foliage waved in the wind. Thsermaï put aside the branches, with a gallantry that not even the most elegant frequenter of the Place Royal would have disowned, and requested Esther to pass into the thicket.

Hidden by the shade of the tamarind-trees were a couple of horses, ready saddled and bridled, and pawing the earth impatiently. One of these horses was evidently intended for Esther, as it bore a lady's saddle.

"Will you allow me to place you on your horse, madam?" inquired Thsermaï of his companion.

At the same moment, and without awaiting her reply, as if he feared fresh hesitation, he lifted Esther in his

arms and placed her in the saddle, untied the two animals, and leaped on his horse with a marvellous agility.

During the few seconds she had been so close to Thsermaï, Eusebius's wife had felt on her face the burning breath of the Javanese, and the hurried pulsations of his heart, which, contrasting in so marked a manner with his constrained accents and respectful tone, revived all Esther's former apprehensions.

"Can you tell me where we are going?" she asked.

"I see nothing against it, madam, except that the day is breaking, that it will very shortly be high tide, that we have several miles of very bad roads before we can reach the barque which is to conduct us to M. Van den Beck, and that we are losing precious time in idle talk."

"I will not trouble you again, and will blindly follow you wherever you may please to lead me."

"Then let us start at once," exclaimed Thsermaï, seizing the bridle of Esther's horse, at the same time spurring his own violently.

But Esther drew back the reins so tightly that her horse, whose mouth was curbed with an Arab bit, reared, beat the air with its fore-feet, but did not stir from its place.

"No, sir," she said, "I have placed my life in your hands; but there is another deposit which I hesitate to confide to you, because it is dearer to me than life. You are a Mussulman: swear to me by your Prophet that my honour is safe in your hands, and I will proceed with you without the slightest fear."

It was now Thsermaï's turn to show uncertainty and hesitation.

"I wish to know whether you will or will not accompany me, for the purpose of treating of your husband's ransom with those who hold him in their hands, and whose agent I am."

"Take the oath, sir," replied Esther; "take the oath which your conscience ought not to object to, or I will not go a step further."

The only answer the rajah made was to tear the reins

violently out of Esther's hands, prick the horse with the point of his dagger, and, giving the rein at the same time to his own, make both the animals clear the thicket, and press them across the plain at a furious gallop.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ENLIGHTENED now, but too late, respecting the intentions of her guide, Esther endeavoured to throw herself off her horse; but Thsermaï, with the skill of an Oriental rider, guided his own horse with his knees and spurs, leaving his hands free; with one he held Esther on her saddle, while with the other he guided her courser, using his creese occasionally to accelerate its pace.

She attempted to cry out, to call for help; but, although the sea was quite purpled with approaching dawn, the sun had not yet risen, the country was deserted, and they had only traversed a few rice-plantations where there was a chance of her voice being heard. Guiding the horses towards the left, Thsermaï dashed into the marshes which surround Batavia, and which extend several leagues in the direction of the south,—a few daring hunters, and a few poor Chinese, who gain a scanty living by the fabrication of rush mats, being the only persons bold enough to risk the deadly exhalations in the spring—that is to say, at a time when the long winter rains rendered their influence less deleterious.

But as the hottest days of the season were approaching, it was hardly probable that the marshes would have any other guests than the wild ducks, plovers, and cormorants, which flew heavily and noisily away at the approach of the horses.

Thsermaï knew perfectly well that all Esther's attempts at escape would now be useless, and, after having traversed about a league of the marshes, he slackened the

speed of the horses, which it was impossible to continue without considerable danger.

They had reached a narrow road, constructed across the marshes by the hands of those whose calling necessitated their working in these desolate places, and composed of branches and hurdles, placed crosswise over the moving ground.

At every step the horses took the riders felt the light bridge bend, and give way; and, being placed over abysses unfathomable to the human eye, it seemed as if the gulf over which they were suspended was endeavouring to open, to prevent its prey escaping.

On both sides a double wall of bamboos and reeds of all kinds hemmed in the two travellers. The roots of the bamboos in some places rested in water of greyish colour and brackish taste, and in others in slime which, although it did not appear less liquid, was nevertheless more dangerous, on account of the impossibility of swimming in it; their other extremities, which the heat of the sun had begun to tinge with a yellow hue, were formed into a graceful arch about twenty feet above the track.

The two travellers proceeded on their way beneath this arch for about a couple of hours.

Thsermaï still remained silent: from time to time he gazed fixedly at Esther—he seemed to be analysing her beauty; and then the rajah's face would assume a look of cruel satisfaction.

Madame Van den Beck's first alarm was over; by degrees she accustomed herself to face the dangers which menaced her. Her thoughts became calmer; she had had time to reflect fully on her situation. If the man who accompanied her was an agent of the pirates, it was not likely he would attempt to treat her with any violence, as his companions would surely make him dearly pay for it when they found their covetous hopes frustrated; and in this case also every step brought her nearer to Eusebius. The idea of again seeing her husband gave her fresh strength to support her terrors.

The hope of learning some details respecting M. Van

den Beck's fate made her resolve to be the first to speak.

"Have we far to go in this way?" she asked.

Observing the calmness with which she spoke, the face of the Javanese brightened up.

"In an hour's time," he replied, "we shall arrive at Patran Bay, where we shall find the pirates."

Then perceiving that Esther bent her head beneath the oblique rays of the sun, as piercing as arrows of fire,—

"The sun inconveniences you," he continued. "Like us, he likes not the men from the north country, but in the barque you will have what is necessary to shield your face from the intensity of his gaze."

"Is it true that I shall again see my husband? You are not deceiving me, sir, are you?" asked Esther, with an expression of happiness which appeared to surprise the Javanese.

"Yes, you will see him again; the pirate chief desires it, and his orders must be obeyed."

"Why, then," timidly continued the young woman, "would you not take the oath I asked you a short time back?"

"Why?" exclaimed Thsermaï, with a sinister laugh, "because no one can fathom the depths of the pirate chief's mind; and it may please him to say to the rajah, whose slave he carried off: 'Son of the Sousonams, here is one more beautiful still than she I stole from you;' and because, if such were his will, the rajah does not wish to have his hands fettered by an oath when the time came for him to clasp in his arms the daughter of the country of mists."

Esther felt a cold shudder pass through her frame, and she lowered her eyes beneath the ardent gaze of Thsermaï.

"If he who speaks to me is a rajah, and is descended from the Sousonams, how is it that he obeys an obscure chief of those you call pirates."

Thsermaï shrugged his shoulders, but did not reply.

At this moment his horse, which was proceeding at a

moderate trot, stopped abruptly and fell back on its haunches. The movement was so sudden and violent that Thsermaï, in spite of his firm seat, was nearly thrown from the saddle.

He gazed around to discover the object which had startled the animal, and the bronze cheeks of the Javanese became of a deeper hue.

He observed that the road had been broken up; the hurdles had been removed for a distance of about thirty feet; the grey slime was laid bare, and further progress impossible.

"May the black angels seize him who did this," he exclaimed furiously; "we must retrace our steps."

Then, like a man who feels that every moment is precious, he first made his own horse turn round and then Esther's, and started off at the same swift pace over the road they had just traversed.

But it was soon Thsermaï's turn to stop the two horses; Esther observed him stand up in his stirrups, and gaze intently on the other side of the reeds.

"What is the matter?" asked Madame Van den Beck, who perceived the uneasiness of her guide.

"Wait for me here a moment, and do not move upon any account; remember that on the right and on the left, on all sides, is death, and that I alone can lead you to him you wish to see again."

On saying this, Thsermaï pushed forward his horse with as much confidence as if he was riding on firm earth. In a few minutes Esther saw him return, still at full gallop; his swarthy complexion had become livid: behind him there arose a thick smoke.

"Fire! fire!" he called out.

"Fire amongst these reeds?" she exclaimed, in her turn changing colour. "Oh no, it is impossible."

"Look!" abruptly replied Thsermaï, pointing with his finger to the dense clouds of smoke, which, after having run swiftly along the tops of the bamboos, rose higher and higher in immense spirals towards the sky. Then listening,—

"Hark!" he exclaimed

And Esther began to distinguish, in the murmur of the breeze and the roaring of the fire, the crackling of the still green leaves of the reeds.

Her heart beat violently, a cold perspiration bedewed her forehead; death did not alarm her, but to perish just as all her hopes had been revived of again finding herself with her husband seemed terrible.

"Who can have kindled this fire?" she asked.

"No friendly hands, we may be sure," he exclaimed, biting his lips so furiously that the blood marked where his teeth had closed upon them; "here is another proof of it."

As he spoke another column of smoke began to mount upwards on their right, a short distance from them.

"Back, back!" he exclaimed, "in five minutes, the branches upon which we are standing will be like a brazier, beside which the fires of hell are mere child's play. Back!" and, suiting the action to the word, he rushed to that part of the road which ended where it had been cut off.

He had ceased guiding Esther's horse; self-preservation having absorbed every other thought. The young woman followed him,—she found him on the border of the marsh, engaged in measuring with his eye the space which interrupted the passage. Imminent as the danger was, the Javanese seemed irresolute; his eyes wandered from the gulf which he must leap, to the fire which was overtaking him; over and over again he seized the reins, as if he had made up his mind, but, as often, let them fall over his horse's neck.

"It would be tempting Mahomet," he at last exclaimed, "to expect an animal to make such an effort."

At this moment, the fire roared with the noise of a hurricane, and the wind drove before it a cloud of smoke which covered the narrow space where this terrible scene was passing.

Esther, with a cry of despair, threw herself off her

horse, and rushed towards the man who, a short time before had so fearfully aroused her terror.

"Save me!" she cried, "for Heaven's sake save me!"

"Out of the way!" replied Thsermaï in a brutal voice, thrusting her back, "out of the way; you will find your husband in hell, if it be the will of the prophet."

Taking plenty of room, raising his horse with an extraordinary power, burying his large spurs deep into the animal's flanks, he launched him across the abyss.

Such was the strength and energy of the noble animal that his furious bound would have enabled him to clear the obstacle, and reach the other side, but, at the very moment he was taking the leap, a cord, which had previously been tied on one side to a bamboo carefully hid in the slime and under the rotting roots of the rushes, suddenly made its appearance, held on the other side by some invisible hand; the feet of the poor beast became entangled in the cord, and horse and rider fell into the slimy gulf.

Thsermaï uttered a shriek of despair, which was heard above the roaring of the fire.

His cry was answered by another cry, a cry of triumph, and a man, whose face and garments were besmeared with slime, pushed aside the hedge of rushes which bordered the road, and leaped upon the road, and, without heeding Esther, fixed his ardent gaze upon the gulf in which the wretched Javanese and his steed were struggling.

"Thsermaï! Thsermaï!" he shouted.

Thsermaï, who had only sunk into the slime as far as his waist, while his horse, being heavier, had almost entirely disappeared, did not appear to despair of gaining the firm ground again; he turned his head in the direction whence he had heard his name uttered, thinking perhaps, in his anxiety, that it was some unhoped-for deliverer sent him by Providence.

"Hurruck!" he murmured, as his face became the colour of the slime, in which he saw his death fast approaching. He stretched out his arms despairingly to the opposite side. But this movement proved fatal, his

whole body was drawn into the gulf; his head and arms alone, by a convulsive effort, remained above the surface.

"Yes, Hurruck," replied the Gueber, with a shout of laughter, like the scream of the hyena; "Hurruck, who has come to rejoice over your death, rajah, just as he will rejoice when the other two perish."

"Hurruck, Hurruck, save me."

"Save you! You promised the Gueber a wife, and you gave him a corpse; I return you the favour; you were trying to obtain the throne of Java, and you have found your death in one of its bogs."

"Hurruck, Hurruck!" cried the unhappy wretch, his voice becoming harsh and hollow, "give me your hand, Hurruck, and you shall choose from my harem."

"Spare him," cried Esther, in her turn, the scene chilling her with horror, and thinking that death would be her own fate shortly, "spare him,—for pity's sake spare him."

"Spare him!" shrieked Hurruck, standing erect before Madame Van den Beck, "do I look as if I would spare him?"

Esther bowed her head in silence. Hurruck turned again towards the Javanese.

"Look at the sun, son of the Sousonams, look at the globe of fiery gold, which causes life to circulate in our veins, gaze on it before you enter that darkness which has no end; the night we have here, is a mere mantle thrown over our pleasures to enhance their charms, those pleasures of which you were so greedy, rajah, but which you will never taste again. The beautiful Arroa is already lavishing upon another the kisses you were so jealous of. Seek in the mud, where you will soon be rotting, some reptile whose embraces shall replace hers."

Hurruck pronounced each of these imprecations deliberately, as if he wished them to increase his enemy's agony. But Thsermaï did not seem to hear them, or, if he did, he no longer understood their meaning.

Death ascended, ascended slowly, but pitilessly; its

terrors had already paralyzed his intellect. His lips were covered with froth ; blood-stained tears started from his eyes ; from his over-burdened breast burst forth hollow, inarticulate sounds, which had scarcely anything human in them.

By an almost superhuman effort he endeavoured to delay his approaching death, by placing himself in a recumbent position ; but the contact of the slime, which would soon become fatal to him, inspired him with a feeling of insuperable disgust ; he threw himself back suddenly, and the movement only made him sink deeper than before.

The lower part of his head had disappeared in the terrible element, which, as large serpents do, devoured its victim with a slow deliberation, which seemed purposely calculated to gratify the Gueber's infernal joy.

He tried once more to appeal to his enemy's pity ; but the fetid slime had already entered his throat.

Nothing more could now be seen of him but two glaring eyes, injected with blood rolling in their orbits, replacing voice and action by their startling expression of terror and supplication, horrible to look at.

Then the eyes, then the forehead, and lastly the hair sank in the abyss which closed over him.

A deep sigh burst from Hurruck's breast ; he perhaps regretted that the hideous sight had terminated so quickly, or perhaps he found that death had showed itself very impatient to finish its work.

All however was not over for the wretched rajah.

His convulsions still shook the soil which concealed a human existence in its bosom, and gently stirred the surface of the mud. And then a hand, black with the mud, and clenched in agony, rose above the surface, and like the voice seemed to ask for mercy and pity.

Hurruck gave another of his fearful laughs, which roused Esther from the torpor into which sheer terror had plunged her. She drew her hands from her face, which she had covered over to shut out the horrible sight ; she opened her eyes, and perceived Thsermaï's

arm, and overcome by her emotions she sank fainting at the feet of the Gueber.

When she returned to her senses, she found that she was no longer in the marshes, but on a cliff which overlooked the sea. Upon opening her eyes she perceived Hurruck seated a short distance from her. The Gueber's face had lost the fearful expression of concentrated hate which it had manifested during the recent scene with Thsermaï; he was mixing his betel-leaf with quicklime and areca-nut, with a calmness which frightened Esther almost as much as the scene through which she had so recently passed.

A movement of repulsion escaped her; then thinking that Hurruck's crime had broken the last link of hope of joining her husband, she bowed her head and burst into tears.

A smile full of bitterness appeared on the lips of the Gueber; he rose to his feet, approached Madame Van den Beck, and gently touched her with his finger.

"Why do you weep, woman?" he exclaimed.

Esther pointed to a ship's boat which had just left the beach below them. Four sturdy rowers made the little craft fly across the surface of the waters; at the helm sat a man, whose red sarong floated in the wind like a flag.

Although the distance which separated the Gueber and the young woman from the boat was considerable, the former was able to recognize Noungal; his eyes flashed fire and his bosom heaved convulsively.

"Alas!" exclaimed Madame Van den Beck, "they are doubtless those whom I came to meet, and who are tired waiting for us. The murder you have committed has prevented my joining them. Who can now foresee what may happen to my poor Eusebius?"

Hurruck appeared to make an effort to suppress the feelings which the sight of the pirate chief had aroused.

"Listen!" he replied; "for it is Ormuzd who speaks by my voice. This night you held in your power the life of him who had thrown a flaming brand upon the

dwelling of your husband, whom he hated as much as he hated the Javanese whom you just now saw die. Your hands have been merciful and faithful to your oath. And so when he whom I adore arose above the horizon, Hurruck dared to turn his face towards him and interrogate him. Ormuzd replied : 'My law is written in the books ; I have told my people : If an infidel offers you a grain of millet, return him a bushel of wheat ; if he offers you his finger, give him your arm, as a child of Parsis must not be less generous than an infidel.' And so I made a funeral pile of my hatred, and the fiery gaze of Ormuzd has reduced it to cinders, which the wind has swept away, and my heart is now free from any angry feeling against him whose name you bear. In my turn I now say to you : 'Do not regret having missed those you were in search of : gilded hope does but hide the iron of stern reality. It is useless to try and extract honey from the bitter juice of the euphorbia. Those whom you now perceive flying, as rapidly as the screaming sea-birds over the crested waves, are your enemies, and the enemies of the man you love, as they are also Hurruck's enemies ; but Hurruck has accepted no benefit at their hands, Hurruck would spit upon mercy, Hurruck will aid you in serving his own vengeance, which he has just now but whetted. They run, they fly, like birds of prey eager for the quarry, but the arrow of the hunter will seek the bird in the air, and then Noungal shall no more escape Hurruck than did Thsermaï.' "

As he uttered these last phrases, Hurruck seemed to forget he was addressing Esther ; he had advanced to the edge of the cliff, which, rising in a peak, overhung the ocean from its lofty height ; and with his hand stretched towards the bark, which merely resembled a black speck on the waves, he threw each word to the winds, as if he wished them to reach Noungal's ears.

Esther listened to him in amazed surprise—the precise sense of his figurative language escaped her ; she could not understand the connection of the Gueber's hatred,

between her husband, the Javanese who had died so miserably in the marshes, and him whom Hurruck himself designated as the leader of the Bohemians of the Sea; but she understood that the Gueber had not only forgiven Eusebius, but that he had also promised to second her endeavours to effect the deliverance of him whom she supposed to be a prisoner, while slaking that thirst for vengeance against the pirate which seemed to devour him.

"But Eusebius—Eusebius!" she exclaimed, endeavouring to recall Hurruck to what most interested her.

"Before the sun shall have risen and set four times you shall see him."

"Free?"

"The fetters which bind him are stronger than those made of diamonds and steel—I can promise you nothing."

"What must I do, then?"

"Follow me."

Hurruck and Esther descended the cliff, and proceeded in the direction of the interior of the island.

They passed near the marsh which had proved so fatal to Madame Van den Beck's first guide. The remains of the rushes which the flames had devoured were still smoking, and at times the flame seemed on the point of reviving; but as it had only burnt those which were deprived of sap and verdure, it went out after having traced a black mark around the stems of the bamboos which had remained upright. On approaching a portion of the marsh which the fire had not touched, Hurruck gave a peculiar whistle; at its sound Maha leaped from a bush and sprang towards the Gueber.

The sight of this terrible animal alarmed Madame Van den Beck, but Hurruck reassured her with a look; he passed his hand over the quivering coat of the panther, which walked behind him with the docility of a dog, and they then continued their route.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The low fever which was consuming Eusebius, kept alive by the philters which Arroa gave him, rapidly impaired his health and youthful vigour.

He was not yet thirty years of age, and was already an old man. The violence of the emotions to which he had yielded, had furrowed his brow with the lines of premature old age; he walked with his body bent, his head sunk on his breast; and the brilliancy of his eyes seemed quenched, except when it pleased Arroa to summon to his face the sad brightness which she herself bore in her countenance; for, in proportion as Eusebius's body became weaker, his tenderness for the daughter of Argalenka became stronger; it seemed as if this tenderness was now the sole tie which kept his enervated body above the tomb, towards which it was fast hurrying.

The sun had reached the centre of its course, the sky bore that deep and dark-blue tint which makes those giddy who, gazing, seek to penetrate its hidden mysteries; the surface of the sea, smooth as a mirror, was covered with light vapours, which ascended in spirals like so many fiery serpents; the heat was suffocating, and the flaming orb seemed to have gathered in one fiery furnace the earth, the water, and the blazing vault of heaven.

The breeze had sunk in silence, the waters scarcely murmured, the birds hidden among their leafy coverts had ceased their music, the grasshopper's noisy wings were hushed, the leaves of the lofty cocoanut-trees were languishingly folded. It was the dead silence of mid-day, deeper and more solemn in tropical climes than the silence of night.

Two voices alone seemed to protest against this deadness of all living things.

These voices proceeded from a grove of citron and

mango trees, whose leaves, intermixed and shaded with dark green and violet, did not appear to have suffered from the excessive heat, their roots being refreshed by the waters of the river which flowed at a short distance, and their summits shaded by the lofty trunks of the fig-tree tribe, which spread over the shrubs of the grove a second vault of foliage, impenetrable to the heat of the day.

One of these voices was singing a passionate love-song to the accompaniment of the *chalempang*, a kind of Javanese guitar.

"Why do you look so sad, Arroa?" said Eusebius; for it was he and the young Indian girl. "Are your thoughts still of death, as they have been wont to be?"

"I was not thinking of death, Eusebius. Death with thee would be a happiness, the remembrance of which would extend beyond the grave."

"Then why not drive away the gloom which clouds your smile?"

"Because, if I am not thinking of death, I am thinking of that which terrifies me more than death—a separation, which would remove us from each other in this life; which would leave me to fade and wither away in absence and regret."

"What mean you? What can you fear?"

"Everything."

"For Heaven's sake, explain yourself!"

"Eusebius, Eusebius," replied Arroa, whose voice was broken, as if her emotion prevented her speaking, "I wished to have kept my apprehensions and my agony to myself, and to have spared you. Alas! I blush for my weakness; it ill becomes a slave to offer her master a thorn, instead of the tribute of roses which is his due! No, question me no more; let us pursue pleasure as butterflies run after the flowers and light, without anxiety for what the morrow reserves for us."

"Arroa, the men of the west do not resemble those of your country; their heart is incorporated with the heart of her they love, and grief cannot wound the one without

the other. Speak without fear; pour your sufferings into my bosom, for the half of them is mine. What is it you fear? Speak."

"My father."

"Your father, who joined our hands?"

"Yes; but, since the day when, in his happiness at seeing me smile once more, he placed your hand in mine, his brow is clouded with anxious thoughts. He remembered that our faith was not the same. In you he sees an infidel. He says that in your eyes we are idolaters; and the old man trembles, asserting that Buddha will curse the impious union."

"Child, by whatever name men may call it, the Deity we worship is the same. Like yourself, I believe that all that is beautiful to the eye is His work; and the precepts of His law are precepts of charity and mercy, like those which Buddha has commanded you to observe as duties."

"No; for our deity has foreseen that one passion is not sufficient for the heart of man for the time he has to pass on the earth; while your faith teaches you, that the two beings whom your deity has united are bound to each other as by a chain of iron, and that his anger will fall on the one who seeks to break it."

"Well!" exclaimed Eusebius with breathless emotion.

"You know the reliance our tribe place in dreams. They think that Buddha speaks to his children while they are asleep. Last night, my father saw you in his dreams; your hand rested in the hand of a woman whose hair was golden-hued, and whose complexion shone like the flower of the malatti. This woman held to her bosom a child as fair and white as herself; she was thrusting aside a black-eyed beauty, whom my father recognized as his daughter, and whom she prevented approaching you; she succeeded in throwing her down, and then spurned her with her foot; the child joined its maledictions to the maledictions of the mother."

"Arroa," replied Eusebius, whose voice trembled as he

spoke, "let old age lose itself in the country of chimeras; what have we to do with such vain phantoms?"

"Alas! alas! will you still speak so when the sea lies between you and Arroa; when in vain you will call upon her, and when in vain she will murmur to the breeze the name of her loved one."

"The sea? what mean you?"

"Yes, I wished to hide it from you. My father yesterday, after the vision he had seen in his dreams, poured upon my head the water which was to wash away the consecration with which he had blessed our betrothal. He now thinks that I am no longer thine; and he has resolved to take me with him to the land of our ancestors, to return towards the source of the great river consecrated to Brahma."

"I will follow you," exclaimed Eusebius; "I will follow you anywhere, everywhere, Arroa; nothing, not even your father's will, nor earth, nor heaven, shall henceforth snatch you from me."

"But this woman—this woman who may soon—to-morrow, to-day, perhaps—return to reclaim the place that I have usurped by your side?"

"What matters it?"

"What matters it, do you say? Do you not perceive that I, too, am jealous, Eusebius, that another should claim a right to your slightest caress? No, no! your words prove that it is Buddha who has spoken to my father in his dream; and to escape from the commission of a crime, I must flee this place!"

"Say not so, Arroa, when it is for you alone that I live," exclaimed Eusebius, bursting into tears. "May the vain spectres of the past perish, if they presume to drag me from a happiness greater than mortal man ever yet knew. Let them come, and my loudest and deepest curses shall drive them from my presence; maledictions will be too strong to repulse them."

"Eusebius, you do not love this woman, then?"

"Did you not hear me curse her?" replied the Dutchman.

Eusebius was interrupted by a sigh, which seemed to issue from behind the thick covert of the ferns which carpeted the citron-grove. There was such an expression of deep and acute suffering in this sigh, that both he and Arroa rose simultaneously, and hurried in the direction whence the sound proceeded.

Arroa arrived the first. She pushed aside the branches, and discovered Esther seated on the grass, with her face buried between her knees. Behind her, with dark, stern look, stood Hurruck, the serpent-charmer.

When the Indian girl perceived Eusebius's wife, her face expressed neither emotion nor surprise. She turned towards Eusebius with a calmness that indicated her knowledge of his wife's presence.

"My own beloved," she said, in a caressing tone of voice, "she of whom I spoke is here: I trust it was not merely your lips which spoke just now?"

Esther did not raise her head; she remained dumb, immovable, and resigned, like a victim seeking to free herself from the sentence of death which separates her from all things living.

Eusebius was as pale as a spectre; his haggard eyes wandered from Arroa to Esther; he passed his hand over his forehead bathed in perspiration. He did not answer Arroa; it was Hurruck who spoke.

"Christian," said the Gueber, "Ormuzd made man as naked as the worm that crawls on the earth, and as feeble. He gave him the leaves of the trees and the skins of animals to hide his nakedness; he has given him repentance to assist his weakness; but repentance endures but an hour, its flight is as swift as that of the swallow. Christian, drive away the demon that has taken possession of your soul. Delay not, or it may be too late."

"No," murmured Eusebius, whose hand Arroa had seized, and was covering with passionate kisses.

"Christian," continued Hurruck, "let go that hand. Far better were it to hold between your fingers an iron

heated in the forge. Spurn that woman : her words are sweet, and so is the fruit of the antchar, but death is within its vermilion pulp. The daughter of the Beduin has become the prey of evil spirits ; the kisses of the son of Ariman have sullied her ; and she has walked with the foes of Ormuzd and his children. He whom you have thrice met, he into whose snare you have thrice fallen, has made her his accomplice, and has said to her, 'Go, and bring me the man I wish to catch in the net I have spread in the dark.' She came, and has made your reason wander with drinks and philters. Christian, it is said that in your country, as in ours, there are fearful beings who prolong their lives by the flesh and blood of dead bodies. The anger of Ariman is spread over the whole earth : tremble lest you fall into the hands of the Barkasahan, who adds to his own days the days of those who raise an impious hand against the sacred fire which animates us, and extinguishes it before its time. You have still time for repentance ; recall the words you have just uttered, and pray to be delivered from the demon, for he is at hand."

"What matters it!" exclaimed Eusebius, in a frenzied accent, his whole frame trembling convulsively, and his eyes starting from their sockets ; "you speak to me of losing Arroa, and you think to frighten me by the spectre of death ; but what will existence be without her? Death will be gladly welcomed, if it do but deliver me from a tie which for the second time I curse."

Esther's sobs increased.

"For the last time, Christian," said the Gueber, "think that he who was once named Basilius, he who is now called Noungal, he who will soon be Eusebius Van den Beck, is not far off, he is coming, he comes——"

"He is here!" exclaimed a sonorous voice behind Esther's husband, who turned round and perceived the terrible Malay standing by him, and gazing on him with the sinister sneer he had inherited from Doctor Basilius.

As soon as Hurruck heard the voice of Noungal he attempted to hurry from the grove.

But as Noungal saw him fly, he uttered a loud shrill cry—the pirates' war-cry. Immediately the solitude became peopled from all sides: from behind the trunk of every fig-tree, from the covert of every bush, from under each tuft of foliage, a man started up, and before the Gueber had made a dozen steps in advance he was surrounded by pirates, who threatened him with their creeses, their javelins, and muskets.

"Seize that man," exclaimed Noungal.

But, on seeing the danger of his master, Maha—who until then had remained hidden behind the ferns where Esther was seated, sunk in that somnolence peculiar to animals of the feline species—arose, its coat quivered and trembled all over, its lips were drawn back, its tail beat the ground, which it tore up with its claws; and the moment one of the pirates, anxious to execute the orders of his master, laid his hand upon Hurruck, the panther made a terrible bound, and falling on the shoulders of the assailant, dashed him bruised and wounded to the earth, and stood with its powerful paw resting on the chest of the man it had just overthrown, and its flaming eyes wandering over its master's enemies, who, terrified by this sudden and unlooked-for attack, did not dare to move.

"May the curse of the prophet rest upon you, cowards!" exclaimed Noungal; "can a vile animal like that make you tremble?"

On saying this, he drew a pistol from his belt, cocked it, and took a steady aim at the panther.

But the moment the trigger fell, Hurruck threw himself before Maha, and made a rampart of his own body; the ball hit him above the hip, and tore his flesh to such an extent that in an instant his sarong was dyed with blood.

"Maha, Maha," he said, without his face betraying the least pain or emotion, "Maha, the hour has not yet arrived; fly into the thick forest, which will hide you from their blows; fly, Maha, I command you."

The eye of the panther followed the gesture with which Hurruck accompanied these words; she understood them, and obeyed him with a marvellous docility.

At the moment the pirates, stung to the quick by the reproaches of their chief, hurried forward to attack her, and just as Noungal was pointing the muzzle of a second pistol, Maha, rapid as the lightning from the clouds, sprang over the heads of the bandits, and threw herself into the river.

A few balls struck the water in the direction of the panther, and a few arrows whistled in the air above her head, but none touched her; she gained the opposite bank, and in a few bounds had cleared the space which separated it from the woods.

Hurruck's countenance, which until then had borne a dark and anxious look, brightened immediately: he breathed freely, a smile of triumph passed across his lips, and he remained calm and haughty beneath the angry gaze of Noungal.

"Gueber," asked the latter, "what have you done to Thsermaï?"

"A little mud, like the slime of the marshes which surround the great city; but ask the reptiles which people these marshes; they will answer your question better than I can, Noungal."

"You confess your crime?"

"I glory in my vengeance! Ormuzd was with me."

"Gueber," replied the Malay, "you have nipped in the bud the hope our brothers entertained of seeing the descendant of its ancient sovereigns reign on the throne of independent Java."

"What does it matter to the slaves by what name their oppressor is called?" said Hurruck with irony; "if the whip which smites them is not called Thsermaï, it is called Noungal, but it will not be the less a whip."

The Malay turned livid, and bit his thin lips.

"You have carried out the wishes of the white men, our enemies, in killing him who alone could unite the Javanese

and lead them to victory ; you have raised a sacrilegious hand against a son of the sultans ; you know the punishment which the laws of the island have decreed against your crime."

"Yes," briefly replied Hurruck.

"That punishment is the stake. Bind this man," continued the Malay, addressing himself to the pirates ; "to-night you will prepare the pile."

Hurruck held out his hands to be bound ; and Noungal, turned towards Eusebius, who, seemingly overcome by the emotions he had undergone, was lying with his head on Arroa's bosom, helplessly indifferent to what was passing around him.

"Eusebius Van den Beck," said the pirate chief, "I think that the worthy Doctor Basilius, *your* uncle and *my* friend, would be sufficiently satisfied with the curses we all heard you pronounce just now, to consider himself the legitimate owner of an existence which, rather imprudently for a man so inflammable as you seem to be, you had attached to the eternity of your sentiments. When will it suit you that I should take possession of what is my due, by virtue of an assignment which Doctor Basilius was good enough to make in my favour ? "

"When you please," replied Eusebius, in a voice scarcely intelligible, his attention seemingly absorbed in contemplating the countenance of the beautiful Arroa, who was smiling at him.

"Eh ! eh ! eh ! there is more than one point in which a pirate chief resembles a merchant ; besides, I have inherited the principles of that excellent Doctor Basilius, and will adhere to the commercial traditions under which your mutual engagement was entered into. I will give you twelve hours to carry out the small transfer which I have the right to exact, and to divest yourself, in Arroa's favour, of the remaining third part of your fortune."

"Twelve hours ! twelve hours ! " murmured Arroa in Eusebius's ear ; "an eternity of happiness for us both !"

Eusebius did not attempt to answer Noungal, but passed his arm round the neck of the Indian girl, and drawing her head towards him, kissed her on the lips.

Noungal, laughing his diabolical laugh, gazed upon the group.

The pirates were about to take Hurruck away, when, at the sound of the latter's footsteps, Esther raised her head.

"Gueber," she exclaimed, turning towards the fire-worshipper, "now is the time to be faithful to the last promise you made me."

"It shall be as you wish. I told you I would help you to save your husband. Ormuzd is my witness that, to keep my oath, I have risked more than my life. I told you that if Ariman proved stronger than myself, you should receive from me that which will save you from further suffering. Take this, therefore, and may the hand of Heaven, who judges us all, be over you."

With these words, and despite the thongs which bound his arms, Hurruck succeeded in raising to his mouth the string of a little cotton bag which hung round his neck, untied the string with his teeth, and the bag fell at Esther's feet.

She seized it, and, tearing off the covering, carried to her lips some of the reddish grains which it contained.

The moment after, a livid pallor overspread her countenance; large circles of dark blue appeared around her eyes, and then the eyes themselves became covered with a film; her strength seemed to abandon her; her body inclined backwards, and she fell to the earth.

But still her gaze was fixed upon her husband.

"Eusebius! Eusebius!" she said in a failing voice, "if I had but known earlier how great a burden I was to you, I would have relieved you of my presence long ago, and your happiness would not have been so dearly purchased."

This spectacle seemed to arouse Eusebius from his torpor; his knees sunk under him; he stretched out his hands to his dying wife.

"Come, come," exclaimed Arroa, endeavouring to drag him away; but some invincible force seemed to nail him to the place.

"Eusebius," continued Esther, "I am dying fast; will you refuse me the consolation of bidding you, whom I have loved so fondly, a last farewell?"

"Do not listen to that woman," exclaimed Arroa, trembling with anger; "have you forgotten the happiness I have yet in store for you?"

"Eusebius," said Esther, her strength seemingly almost exhausted, and her voice scarcely audible, "Eusebius, in the name of our child do not refuse my prayer."

Eusebius still remained motionless; but two tears had fallen from his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

Esther saw these tears, and her face brightened up with a smile.

"May Heaven forgive you," she said, "as I forgive you."

Her lips faintly opened with her last sigh; her eyes grew fixed; another moment, and she moved no more.

Eusebius pushed Arroa violently aside, as she endeavoured to drag him from the scene; he threw himself upon his wife's inanimate body, covered it with kisses and tears, tried to warm her hands, already cold, and then threw himself into a frenzy of despair.

Suddenly, and as though he wished to hide his grief from every gaze, he caught up the body of his wife in his arms, passed through the serried ranks of the pirates, and disappeared in the coppice with his burden.

The pirates attempted to obstruct his passage; but Noungal stretching out his hand, said,—

"Let him go, for wherever he goes he is mine now."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE pirates had established their camp at the mouth of the river.

The proas which had brought them thither were anchored just opposite, and were arranged in two parallel lines in the bay of Zand. A few light vessels were sailing about in the distance, to protect the corsairs from any surprise from the sea.

These pirates were nearly all natives of the various islands in the Indian ocean, containing, however, among their ranks several hundreds of Chinese sailors, taken from the junks which generally become the prey of those eastern rovers, and who had embraced the adventurous life of their conquerors to free themselves from slavery. But the bulk of the two thousand bandits of which Noungal's army was at present composed, had been recruited in the Solo islands, where piracy is a social law, as it was formerly in barbarous states and among the maritime populations of Borneo and Sumatra, whose fierce dispositions differ in so marked a manner from their neighbours the Javanese, who are so mild and indolent.

In order to induce these men to renounce the independence of which they were so proud, to unite the crews of the numerous proas in one common cause, to get them to face daylight and to attempt a land expedition, it was necessary that an important expedition should be organized, and that a considerable prey should be held out to their cupidity.

In fact, it was nothing less than the conquest and pillage of the opulent island of Java. It was in setting before their eyes the brilliant prospect in view, that Noungal had succeeded in overcoming their scruples, in removing their prejudices, in silencing all susceptibilities

in gathering in an almost homogeneous mass these bandits, who were ready enough to acknowledge, as their chief, the most celebrated of their corsairs, but were far from showing him invariable submission.

The day had now arrived when ambition, which had been brooding in Noungal's heart, was ready to burst forth—when he was to reap the fruit of the skill and patience with which, for so many years, firstly under the name of Basilius, and then under the second form which his supernatural power had enabled him to assume, he had fomented discord and revolt amongst the population of Java, with the aid of Thsermaï's influence.

Although it had been discovered, the plot which had crowned the work of Noungal still remained sufficiently formidable. A third of the Javanese population was ready for insurrection. The native chiefs had been flattered by the hope of reconquering their former quasi-feudal rule. The Chinese, a considerable body in point of numbers, were too shamelessly rapacious not to show their envy and their greed; they rejoiced at the idea of seeing commerce, which the idle Javanese disdained, pass from the hands of the Europeans into their own, and thus of acquiring the monopoly of it for their own country; and lastly, the general mass of the people,—who, like the culprit stretched on the wheel, thinks a relief to its sufferings may be found in the slightest change of fortune—as usual, rejoiced in anticipation at the downfall of their tyrants.

Although the Dutch government had directed that the merchant vessels should land their crews, the European troops were too small in number to resist a general insurrection, especially when the pirate chief threw into the scale the creeses of his own formidable rovers, and when, on the shores of the islands which had disgorged them, there were numerous assailants holding themselves in readiness to follow in the track of the fortunate buccaneers at the very first signal of success.

The death of Thsermaï had not altered the plans of

Noungal, nor had it weakened his hopes. This half-demon had never intended to work for the advantage of Doctor Basilius's former pupil. His ambition, after having secured, by most horrible means, a most monstrous immortality, was nothing less than the throne of the sultans of Java. Thsermaï had been a valuable instrument in his hands, owing to the influence which he derived from his birth; but Noungal had determined to destroy this instrument, sooner or later. The last day the voluptuous rajah had been destined to see, had only been advanced by an hour; but it mattered little to Noungal; his reason for punishing Hurruck was more for the penetration he had shown in detecting the secret of his dealings with evil spirits, and for his audacity in having tried to save Eusebius by bringing Esther to him, than for the crime committed in the marshes of Batavia.

What had just taken place in the grove of lemon-trees redoubled the confidence of the pirate chief, and seemed to be a good omen for the future. The prey which Doctor Basilius had prepared for the Malay Noungal had fallen into the latter's hands; the three women had played their parts well; the passions had freely followed the different phases which the old doctor had predicted: a third existence was assured to the vampire, and with this third existence he was about to become master of one of the richest countries in the world.

There was reason, therefore, why the repulsive face of Noungal should be bright and animated, and why his black eyes should sparkle with a sinister lustre as he entered the fisherman's hut, which he used as his head-quarters.

He summoned his lieutenants, and told them that he was obliged to leave to meet the chiefs of the revolt in the forest of Tjidadal, and to arrange the moment for the signal to be given when the insurrection was to commence: he advised great watchfulness on the part of his men, gave the necessary orders respecting Hurruck's punishment, and had a horse brought to him.

He was about starting off, when Arroa, who had until then remained seated at the door of the hut, arose and seized one of the folds of his sarong.

The Indian girl's face was bright and smiling; the disorder which the preceding scene had occasioned in her dress had been repaired, and fresh flowers were wreathed around her head.

"Master," she said, "has not your slave completed the task you gave her to do? She not only mixed the poison you confided to her hands with the white man's drink, but inflamed his heart and mind with passion."

"True," replied Noungal; "like the arrow—like the javelin—like the deadly creese, the white woman, the black beauty, and the Indian girl, have all three been faithful to their master."

"Why, then, have you not recompensed your slave with a look of kindness?" she asked, in endearing tones.

The pirate chief looked upon the beautiful Indian girl with a disdainful smile; and then, striking his spurs into his horse's flanks, he exclaimed with ineffable pride,—

"These are the creatures whose sport you are; these are the disposers of your destinies—miserable men! I shall reign over you, for never shall such creatures penetrate the steel which encases my heart."

Arroa bent her head and sighed, but seemed insensible to the indifference with which Noungal regarded her charms, for she gazed after him, as he departed, with a smile and looks of ardent regard.

Night had now set in; the shore resounded with shouts and clamours, and was lighted up with numerous watch-fires, in spite of Noungal's severe orders on the subject. But, in his absence, no chief had sufficient influence to repress the insubordinate tempers of the rovers, and their camp was a scene of confusion and disorder. They had placed a few sentinels on the heights, to watch the plains, in the same way that Noungal had directed a watch to be kept out towards the sea; and they fancied they might dispense with all further precaution and care,

and gave themselves up to their noisy games, and sought for distractions in the intoxicating effects of rice-brandy and opium.

Those pirates only, who formed part of the flotilla of proas which Noungal commanded in his ordinary excursions, had preserved some discipline. It was in charge of these men that Hurruck was placed.

A thin loose cord, strongly fastened round the Gueber's wrist, extended the whole length of his body, and was then twisted round his feet in such a manner as to render any movement on the part of the prisoner impossible. He was lying upon a small eminence, facing the hut which Noungal had not long since left, and placed in such a manner that they to whose custody he had been committed could attend to their various occupations without losing sight of him, a circumstance which had rendered it unnecessary to place sentinels over him.

The groups formed round the sand-heaps were numerous and close together; their mirth was less noisy than in the other part of the camp; and the Malays, of whom the groups were composed, were better dressed and better armed than their companions; some were silently chewing betel, others were sharpening their weapons, of which they trusted to make good use on the morrow; a dozen pirates formed a circle round several musicians, one of whom sang while the other accompanied him by blowing into a kind of flute; the greater part were listening to one of their companions, who, standing up in the midst of their ranks, was telling them one of those tales which are so dear to Oriental imaginations; but not one of them thought of disobeying the orders of Noungal, who, considering the grave circumstances in which they were placed, had forbidden his men the use of opium and strong drinks.

The group nearest to Hurruck was formed of those who were listening to the recital of the improvisatore. Hurruck, whose countenance was calm and self-possessed,

seemed to pay as much attention to the narratives as if he were free and in the streets of Batavia, and as if he did not observe, at a short distance from where he was lying, the slaves heaping up the wood, reeds, and trunks of trees which were to form his funeral pile.

His apparent indifference, and the interest of the tales he was listening to, did not prevent him from observing what was passing.

For several minutes he had been watching, with an anxious look, a man whom he observed in the shade gliding among the close ranks of the pirates; but who, unlike them, did not wear a turban, nor his hair cut close.

This man appeared to be restlessly seeking some one in the crowd of Malays; just as he entered one of the circles gathered round a watch-fire, the fuel, burning up, threw its reflection upon the man's face, and Hurruck recognized Argalenka.

He waited until the old man came near the mound on which he was laid, and then imitated the hissing of the cobra-capello.

The imitation was so perfect that several of the Malays looked round them in alarm.

Hurruck had resumed his indifferent look, but Argalenka had heard him, and approaching the Gueber, recognized him immediately, and sat down by his side.

But one of the pirates turned round, and seizing a piece of burning wood, threw it at the old man.

"Get you gone, dog!" he exclaimed; "if you do not wish my creese to make a hole in your old hide."

The Gueber raised his voice and said, —

"Your master said that Hurruck was to return to his fathers, but he did not say that the Izerschné should not be recited over his remains when the genius of death, under the form of a fly, should come to take possession of him, to make him undergo the ordeal of the bridge of Tchirevard; he has not condemned him to become the prey of the Dews, who fight over the corpse. Our creeds are not the same, son of Islam: you

sully the bosom of the earth, our common mother, by bringing it in contact with your dead bodies; we carry the impure remains to great heights, that they may become the prey of impure animals; let this man learn what he is to do with me when I shall be no more."

"He is right," exclaimed a Mussulman, more devout than his comrades; "we must be charitable to one who is about to die, although he be a pagan, in order that the Prophet may in his turn be merciful to the faithful."

The improvisatore at this moment began a fresh story, which promised wonders. This diversion was favourable to the Gueber. Curiosity got the better of suspicion: they let Argalenka remain near him.

"Come near me," said Hurruck to him in the Malabar dialect, "and answer me in the language spoken on the banks of the great river; these dogs will not understand us."

"Has your last hour come, then?"

"My last hour!" replied the Gueber disdainfully. "What do you term my last hour? It is that which will mark my entrance into a form better than this present one, perhaps. Ormuzd has decreed that the most powerful of men cannot destroy even a blade of grass. What have I to fear from these?"

"But that pile?"

"That pile will make a few cinders of Hurruck; but the eye of Ormuzd is over the ashes as much as over the splendour of a sultan."

"Gueber," said Argalenka in an agitated voice, "twice you have succoured me; if I can assist you in any way, speak. Although we differ in our religion, I will carry out all the rites of the law of Zand, of which you are a faithful observer. Buddha, who reads our hearts, will approve of my actions."

"Leave idle customs to women and children and priests: a deity has no need of man's assistance to recognize his elect. You can do better for me, old man; you can enable me to fall asleep with tranquillity and joy,—you

can help me to leave this world with the indifference of a traveller quitting a caravansary where he found a few moments' rest."

"What is it you want?—speak!"

"Listen!" replied Hurruck, whose eyes flashed in the darkness,—"listen! The pirate chief thinks I am in his power, and it depends upon you to place him in mine. If you are disposed to see vengeance carried out, to-morrow, not only will nothing remain of these cursed dogs who howl around us but bones bleaching on the shore, for the white men to whom I have given information will exterminate them to the last man, but Noungal also will pay the penalty of his crimes!"

"Hurruck," replied the Beduin, "this is the third time you have tempted me; but I shall remain as faithful as ever to the laws of Buddha as I did on the road to the great city, and in the palace of Thsermaï."

"But did I tell you that he on whom the punishment must fall is a Barkasahan—one of those evil spirits who tempt men, who encourage their vices, and attain immortality by sowing around them despair and shame?"

"You did."

"Do you know that he who is now called Noungal was formerly Doctor Basilius?—do you know that it was he who carried away your child?—do you know that, after having made her the toy of his unbridled passions, he sold her to Thsermaï, the price he paid for the assistance and concurrence of the rajah being the possession of your daughter."

"I know it," replied the Beduin, with resignation in his voice.

"But what you are ignorant of is, that, thanks to the lessons which Arroa received from Noungal,—thanks to the docility with which she lent herself to the infamous practises of the Barkasahan, a man in a few hours becomes the prey of the vampire! And what too, you do not know is, that the breath of the evil spirit sufficed to make Arroa as evil as himself; and at this very mo-

ment, your Arroa is lavishing her affection upon one of these vile bandits."

"Gueber, you lie ; my blood could not descend to such a degree of abjectness."

"Look towards the seashore ; look at yon tent with that little flag fluttering at the top, and through which a feeble light is shining : beneath its folds,—beneath its shadow, you will find your daughter Arroa, smiling on one of these stranger Lascars."

The Beduin started to his feet ; his whole frame trembled convulsively.

"What do you mean to do?" asked Hurruck.

"Gueber," replied Argalenka, in a thick voice, "Buddha, in reserving the execution of justice to himself, has made an exception in favour of the father ; the face of him who begets, bears the reflection of His face, and like Him he must judge and punish."

On saying this, Argalenka moved slowly away ; by the light of the fires which illuminated the plain, Hurruck followed him with his gaze ; he saw him advance towards the tent which he had indicated ; he pulled up one of the pickets,—raised the strip that the picket had fixed to the earth,—passed his head through the opening,—and then disappeared inside.

A few moments after, Hurruck thought he heard a a kind of smothered cry, which traversed the air, and then died away in the confused noises of the valley.

He then perceived the Beduin advancing towards him with measured steps. Argalenka walked unsteadily, his chin rested on his breast ; he returned to his seat by the side of the Gueber, without speaking a word, but his teeth chattered convulsively.

Hurruck gazed upon him with compassionate pity ; he attributed the stupor in which he perceived him plunged to the certainty he had acquired of his daughter's dishonour.

But as the Beduin raised his hands to his face, Hurruck

perceived large spots, dark and wet, on the cuffs of Argalenka's dress.

"Beduin," he said, "there is blood on your sarong."

At the sound of his voice, Argalenka seemed to awake from his stupor; he gazed around him with haggard looks, and seemed more like a dead body risen from the grave than a living creature.

Suddenly his gaze fell on a dagger which he had dropped at Hurruck's feet; and with a piercing shriek, he hid his face in his hands, and fled away crying out,

"I have killed my child! I have killed my child!"

The flight and the cries of the Beduin aroused the attention of the Malays: they rose in wild disorder, and ran towards the prisoner.

Not, however, before he had had time, by crawling like a serpent, to glide over the dagger which Argalenka had dropped, and to stretch himself upon the weapon, from which he expected more than his mere deliverance.

"What have you done with the old man?" asked one of the Malays, of Hurruck, accompanying his question with a violent kick in the sides of the prisoner, while the other pirates carefully inspected the cords with which he was tied.

"I tried to imitate your teller of stories yonder, only that I succeeded still better; for while my recital struck the old man with horror, the one you were listening to only made you gape with wonder."

"In that case you ought to give us a specimen of your skill," exclaimed the improvisatore, in a piqued tone.

"I am quite willing; but what will you do for me in return?"

"What do you want?—speak."

"That you advance my execution by one hour; the pile is ready, so am I. As soon as my recital is finished lead me to the stake, for suspense is more cruel than the torture."

"Your wish shall be gratified," replied one of the

pirates; "as soon as your tale is finished, the heap of wood which is to be your deathbed shall be lighted, and as soon as you have uttered the last words of your story you shall see that that which makes you tremble like a coward is in reality a mere nothing."

"Be it so," replied Hurruck.

The Malays grouped themselves around him, Hurruck placed himself on his side in order to face the majority of them, but also in such a manner as to enable him to press the cords with which his hands were tied upon the sharp blade of the dagger.

The distance at which the fire where the Malays had been first seated was placed favoured the manœuvre.

The Gueber began. "Amongst the first sovereigns of India and of Scinde," he said, "none were more powerful than the Rajah Souran. All the rajahs of the East and West paid him homage, except those of the Chinese. This exception, which displeased the monarch greatly, formed a ground for him to raise an army, as numerous as the sands on the seashore, wherewith to conquer the country. He was victorious in every encounter; with his own hands he killed several sultans, and then married their daughters, thus rapidly approaching the height of his ambition."

"What is the title of you tale?" asked the improvisatore.

"*Cunning is better than strength*," replied Hurruck, continuing his recital. "When it was known in China that the Rajah Souran had already attained the country of Tamsak, the rajah of China was seized with great consternation, and said to his assembled mandarins and captains, 'The Rajah Souran menaces my empire, what do you advise should be done to prevent his progress?' A wise mandarin approached him and said, 'Master of the world, your slave knows of a means.' 'Make use of it, then,' replied the rajah of China. And then the mandarin ordered a vessel to be manned, to load it with a quantity of fine needles covered with rust, and to plant

trees of cahamash and birada upon the deck. He took on board only toothless old men, and sailed for Tamsak, at which place he shortly afterwards arrived."

"Does your tale finish there?" asked the improvisatore jeeringly, perceiving that the Gueber suspended the further recital of his story.

"No," replied the latter; "but the cords which bind my legs are cutting into my flesh and make me suffer cruelly. You will presently be obliged to untie my limbs to lead me to the pile, can you not now give me a little ease?"

One of the Malays, who did not appear at this portion of the story to partake of the indifference of the improvisatore, left the group and rendered the Gueber the service he implored.

He then continued: "When the Rajah Souran learnt that a vessel had arrived from China, he sent messengers to ascertain from the crew at what distance their country was situated. The messengers, on their arrival, questioned the Chinese, who replied, 'When we set sail we were all young men, and, sorrowful at being deprived of the verdure of our forests in the midst of the sea, we planted the seeds of these trees. We are now old and broken down; we have lost our teeth; and those seeds have become trees which bore their fruit a long time before our arrival in this place.' They then showed some of their rusty needles: 'See,' they said, 'these bars of iron were as thick as a man's arm when we left China; now they are almost all eaten away by rust. We cannot tell how many years have passed during our voyage, but you can calculate them by what we have told you."

Hurruck again paused.

"And what did the Rajah Souran do?" exclaimed at the same time, and as in one voice, the improvisatore and the others.

"Alas! alas!" said Hurruck, "the moment approaches when my tale must end. The time is come to keep your promise."

Some of the auditors, without leaving their place, as they were unwilling to lose the *dénouement* of the story which they listened to with their usual eagerness, motioned to the slaves to set fire to the pile.

Hurruck could hear from where he was lying the crackling of the branches and rushes which had been placed around the pile to increase its combustion.

He continued, without his voice betraying the slightest emotion,—

"The messengers reported to the rajah what they had heard. 'If what the Chinese say is true,' said the conqueror, 'their country must be at a prodigious distance. When can we reach there? The wisest plan will be to give up the expedition;' and so at the head of his army——"

Hurruck was here interrupted by a dull, rumbling noise, resembling distant thunder, and which came from the sea.

The Malays arose simultaneously. The uneasiness which the noise they had just heard occasioned them, got the better of their passion for tales such as Hurruck was telling them; all eyes turned in the direction of the sea.

The flame of the pile, having smouldered for several minutes, had liberated itself from the smoke, and rose to a height of twenty feet, casting at the same time a lurid glare upon the waters.

A second sound, resembling the first and proceeding also from the extreme horizon, broke through the dead silence, in which almost every man held his breath suspended. Then the voice of one of Noungal's lieutenants was heard, calling out,—

"The Dutchmen have surprised our cruisers. Why did you light that fire against our orders? it is the fire which points out our position to the white men. Put out that pile as quickly as possible."

In the mean time Hurruck had taken advantage of the little attention bestowed upon him, and pressing the

dagger against his chest, he succeeded in cutting the cords which bound his wrists, and with his hands free he was soon enabled to disengage his legs.

"To arms!" continued the voice, "to arms! and get rid of the Gueber by a blow of the creese."

The Malays turned round to execute the order of their chief, when they perceived the prisoner standing up with the dagger in his hand.

"*Cunning is better than strength!*" exclaimed the Gueber, in a towering voice. "It is your own hands, bandits, that have called down extermination on your heads."

Hurruck was the first to hurl himself upon those who were about to rush on him, and overturned every one who stood in his way. The pirates hurried in terrible confusion and amazement to their boats, for the roar of the cannon had now become more distinct, and every moment approached nearer and nearer.

The Gueber turned his steps in the direction of Argalenka's hut. Just as he was about springing up the bamboo staircase, his foot came in contact with a body. He stooped down and recognized the father of Arroa. He touched him, but the old man did not move.

A smothered cry of rage burst from Hurruck's lips, but at that moment he heard the neighing of a horse and his anger seemed to subside. He went towards the banana plantations, and found the horse that had brought Arroa from Thsermai's palace to the Bay of Zand. He unfastened it, leaped on its back, turned its head in the direction of the river, across which he made it swim, and entered the wood where the panther had that morning disappeared.

Hurruck uttered the cry with which Maha was familiar; to his great surprise it was not responded to. He repeated the call; but Maha did not appear.

He supposed that the tumult which now proceeded from the bay, together with the war-cry of the Malays and the crackling of the musketry, had prevented his voice from being heard. He pressed his horse forward,

made him clear a hillock, and repeated his calls. They were as unsuccessful as the first.

Hurruck's anger burst forth. This man, whom we have seen so completely master over himself with death staring him in the face, now gave way to the wildest exasperation—he tore his hair and his dress, and groaned in seeming despair.

After a while he perceived a black form issuing from a thicket and approaching him by crawling slowly on its stomach. He called Maha, and the panther approached the horse, who shied with fear.

Hurruck gave the horse the bridle, and started off at full speed, persuaded that the panther, having found her master, would follow him; but in a few minutes, on turning round, he no longer saw her; obliged, therefore, to turn back, he found the animal where he had left her.

Furious at a disobedience which Maha had never before exhibited, he threw at her the creese he had kept in his belt—it did not reach her; but before this evidence of her master's anger, she turned herself on her back and uttered plaintive cries, which echoed in the depths of the forest.

Hurruck's moments were counted—at any price he wished to put an end to such singular behaviour; he threw himself off his horse, picked up his dagger, and, holding his steed, which trembled convulsively at the smell of the panther, he succeeded, by seizing Maha by the nape of the neck, in lifting her on the horse's back; he then threw himself behind her, and, taking advantage of the horse's terror at his formidable neighbour, he contented himself with keeping him up and guiding him, and allowed the horse to fly at a fearful gallop—the poor animal thinking by that means to get rid of his objectionable burden.

Maha uttered a hoarse and plaintive cry, which echoed in the distance. It was responded to by a similar cry, but more powerful and sonorous, proceeding from the

midst of the forest. Hurruck, who held the panther in his arms, felt it tremble under his hand.

A few minutes later the Gueber thought he heard the rustling of the thickets along the path they were following in their maddened course; he turned his eyes in the direction of the sound, and perceived an enormous animal, whose skin resemble a tiger's, and he recognized it as another panther of greater size.

Notwithstanding the Gueber's bravery, he shuddered from sheer terror; he seized his creese, and pricked the sides of his courser to make him increase his speed; but the large panther equally increased his pace; his eyes shone in the gloom of the night like two carbuncles; it was not on Hurruck's horse, nor on the Gueber—it was not on a prey that his eyes were fixed, but on the black panther Maha, who, on her side, seemed to watch every movement of the companion they had picked up on their road. Had it not been for the wholesome terror with which her master inspired her, and for the powerful grasp with which he held her across the horse's neck, she would have leaped into the road; but she contented herself with moaning softly, and occasionally interrupted her moanings with one of those hoarse howls, which appeared to have attracted the attention of an animal of her own species towards her.

Every time Maha gave vent to one of these howls, it seemed as if it found an echo, for other howls answered it, sometimes at a distance, and sometimes near at hand.

Soon Hurruck perceived in the darkness before him two other glaring lights, as if awaiting his approach; the group passed with the speed of wind before the two coals of fire; but, once more looking behind him, the Gueber saw the two flaming eyes following him.

A second panther had taken up the chase.

Then Maha redoubled her wailing, and the ferocious beasts seemed to spring up from the earth beneath the horse's feet; from every dell and thicket, from behind every rock, sprang out an animal of Maha's species, and,

each taking a place in the terrible procession, mingled their roars with those of the first comers.

Hurruck's terror and emotion had entirely disappeared; his heaving chest seemed scarcely able to contain his heart; his face was illumined with an infernal joy; his eyes surveyed with unutterable pride the terrible band which followed him; he tried to count them; he joined his cries to Maha's love moans; and every time that another panther was added to their ranks, the night-air resounded with his furious bursts of laughter.

"Thanks, Maha," he exclaimed, passing his hand over the panther's shining black coat; "thanks for having invited your brothers of the forest to the feast I had prepared for you. Hurrah! hurrah! Children of the night, let us press on our speed—let us hurry on our way; in the horizon yonder, the forest of Tjidadal is resplendent with a thousand fires, and it is there a feast worthy of you awaits you all. Hurrah! gather round me, and whet your teeth for the coming feast: sweeter music never sounded in my ears."

And they flew along—they flew along more rapid than the tempest; they flew along, and the black vault of the forest remained behind them; they flew along, and the fields, the valleys, the plains, and rivers disappeared; they flew along, and mountains were crossed and cleared; they flew along, and their heated breath left behind them what seemed like a ray of light in the thick gloom of the night.

They neared the forest of Tjidadal. It was there that Noungal had joined the rajahs who had entered into the conspiracy for insurrection.

He had found them disheartened by the rigorous measures adopted by the Dutch government.

The recollection of the Chinese and native revolts of 1737 and 1825—revolts which had been drowned in the blood of the guilty—recurred to them. They already saw their property confiscated, and a price set upon their heads.

Noungal endeavoured to revive their courage; he informed them that the tributary sultans of Dzouzo Karta, of Soura-Karta, and Madion, had resolved to free themselves from the European yoke, and had already put their troops in movement. And he represented to them that, if their adherents were small in number in the environs of the metropolis, on the other hand, the provinces of Bantam, of Chériban, of Samarang, and the Préangers, were ready to rise as one man; that, although this multitude might be without arms, yet they would be powerful enough to crush the small forces which the rulers of the island could bring against them. He traced in forcible language the sordid avarice, the insolent tyranny, and the spoliations of the conquerors. He blazoned forth to the eyes of the Javanese the glory, triumph, and material advantages they would find in independence.

The more irresolute, founding their opinion upon the knowledge the government had of the conspiracy, wished the day of execution to be adjourned indefinitely. Noungal warmly combated this opinion as weakness and timidity. He assured them that daring alone could save them; that, all being equally compromised, they would all be the victims of colonial vengeance; that tyrants could not be made to tremble with impunity; and therefore that the discovery of their plans left them no alternative between victory or death.

He managed so well that the conspirators regained the enthusiasm they had lost.

They were about to separate,—Noungal to fetch his Malays and lead them against Buitenzorg, as it had been arranged they should commence by the capture of that place, the rajahs to arm their vassals and launch them against the Europeans—when a rumour, resembling the dull roaring of the waves before a storm, circulated amongst the assembly.

Terror was in the air; they had heard in the distance strange sounds and noises, without being able to tell what occasioned them; an instinctive fear seized the

conspirators; they trembled; they wiped their foreheads, bathed in sweat; they listened in dread and agony.

The sinister murmurs had ceased, and nothing was now heard but the sound of a horse's hoofs striking against the stones of the mountain.

Suddenly a horrible concert of discordant cries and furious howls burst at about a dozen paces from the glade in which the conspirators were assembled.

At the same time Hurruck appeared at the entrance of the glade.

First of all the rajahs merely perceived the horse with bleeding nostrils, and flecked with foam, and its mane erect; while the black rider, brandishing his flaming creese in the air, more resembled a spectre than a human being.

The panthers, momentarily scared at finding themselves in the presence of this multitude, remained behind.

But the moment that the Gueber, perceiving Noungal in the midst of the crowd, had lifted his horse to rush at him, Maha uttered one of her plaintive moans, which seemed to have had so singular an effect upon her fierce companions of the forest.

At this moan of the beautiful black panther, the other animals appeared to have forgotten the fear which the sight of human beings generally produces; they cleared the space which separated them from Maha; their hideous muzzles appeared through the bushes, and their flaming eyes sparkled in every direction of the glade; with their bellies on the ground, they seemed preparing for a spring.

The rajahs, mad with fear, rushed through the forest in all directions.

Noungal alone remained.

Hurruck had stopped his horse in front of the Malay, by jerking the bridal so violently that the shattered hams of the poor animal, exhausted by its rapid course, refused to support it any longer; it fell down, and lay on its side at the feet of Noungal, who, comprehending

at once from Hurruck's aspect the danger which menaced him, had rolled his sarong round his arm as a shield, and armed himself with the long creese which he carried at his side.

"Noungal! Noungal!" howled the Gueber, fixing his blazing eyes on his enemy; "you condemned me to the torture of fire; Ormuzd condemns you to the torture he reserves for Barkasahans. Remember the bedaya at Meester Cornelis's: Noungal, here is the living tomb in which Ormuzd has marked your place."

Then the muscular arm of the Gueber seized the black panther round the body, and, with an almost superhuman strength, lifting her over his head, threw her in the direction of the Malay.

Maha, as if understanding what her master expected her to do, began to howl furiously, and the ferocious horde, joining their howls to hers, closed their ranks, and formed around the group a triple circle of menacing teeth.

But Maha did not immediately throw herself on Noungal as Hurruck in his impatience wished her to do. The calm resolute attitude of the pirate chief intimidated her. Stretched on the broken ferns which covered the ground, she gathered up her limbs, and quivering convulsively, waited for the Malay to make some movement which would favour her attack.

Hurruck seemed to sink beneath the agony that oppressed his bosom.

"Maha! Maha!" he exclaimed, "will you abandon your master, who has placed all his hopes in you? Rush on the vampire, Maha; tear his sides with your sharp claws, crush his limbs between your powerful jaws; revenge the white woman, Maha, that I loved before you!"

Stimulated by her master's voice, Maha no longer hesitated, but sprang forward; but Noungal had seen her movement, and the moment she was about to descend on his head, he bounded back and received the panther's

paws on his cloak, and with the other hand he plunged his creese into Maha's flanks.

The weapon disappeared up to the hilt; the distended muscles of the animal lost their power, and, dying, she fell a mass before Hurruck.

Noungal uttered a cry of triumph, and menaced the Gueber with his brandished creese.

But at the same moment the largest and the first of all the panthers that had followed Hurruck, furious at the blow he had seen aimed at the other, threw himself upon Noungal, and overturning him with a blow from his monstrous paw, broke his neck between his formidable jaws.

Then, as if it had been the signal for the quarry, the other ferocious beasts rushed on the Barkasahan, and soon nothing more was heard but a horrible sound of torn flesh and broken bones.

* * * * *

Just then day began to dawn.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Eusebius walked on for some time, carrying Esther in his arms; he wished to hide himself and his burden as far as possible from the sight of human beings.

He climbed the woody slopes of the mountains which surrounded the Bay of Zand; he traversed a forest which seemed as if it had never been trod by the foot of man, in which the nutmeg, the areca, and the cocoanut trees resembled light columns, which the thousand varieties of creeping plants embraced like ivy to their very summits; whilst the ebony-trees, the acacias, and pines of a prodigious height, rising above the vault made by the smaller trees, rendered it almost impenetrable to the rays of the sun.

He cleared a way through the various objects which the luxurious vegetation opposed to his progress, and found himself on a spot of level ground overlooking the wood by which it was surrounded, as well as the plain and the ocean.

He gathered a few branches of the tamarind-trees, collected a quantity of leaves that were within reach, spread them on the rock, and laid Esther on this verdant couch with as much care as though she had been still alive.

He then broke off from their dark and mournful-looking stems a few *kambozas*, the flower of the dead, which had sprung up between the chinks of the rocks, and placed them on Esther's body.

He could hardly believe that all that had taken place had not been a dream; he tried to dismiss from his memory the recollection of the Bedaya, of Cora, and of the Indian girl, who presented themselves to his mind as

the very personification of his remorse; but the aspect of the stiff and inanimate body, of the livid face he had before him, immediately restored him to the stern reality of the moment, and recalled his faults more severely than his conscience could do.

He knelt before Esther, stretched out his arms towards her in prayer and supplication; and raising his voice as if she could hear him, he said,—

"Esther, my weakness and presumption have lost us. I had forgotten that God had made our hearts of clay as well as our bodies; and that His image alone, when engraven on those hearts, can preserve us from corruption; you forgave me, but He, my judge, is it possible that He will do so?"

Then, after a pause, he continued: "No; love such as is shown us in our dreams is not of this world; we feel it, but we know it not. Here below, treachery, ingratitude, and weakness are its lot; it is only when our spirit is freed from its wretched fleshly covering, that the aspirations which shed a faint light upon our darkness are realized, overwhelming us with tenderness. I shall soon be able to love you as you deserve, Esther; and with this thought death will be sweet to me."

Again another current of ideas swept through his brain; the remembrance of what he had lost annihilated the hopes by which he had endeavoured to soothe these terrible moments. He gave himself up to despair; he wept like a child; he struck his head against the rock, and called upon Esther with bitter wailing and distress.

Neither the tumult from the valley which resounded on the heights, nor the roaring of the cannon which reverberated over the sea, nor the sharp rattle of the musketry, nor the cries and imprecations of the Malays routed and pursued by the Dutch in all directions, nor the fearful glare of the burning proas which the European fleet had set on fire, could rouse Eusebius from his grief.

The whole world for him was centred in the few feet of rock whereon reposed the body of his wife.

Night was gradually fading away; the morning star shone brilliantly in the star-lit vault of heaven; rose-coloured rays of light illumined the deep blue of the cloudless sky, as they sprung from the bright line which was visible on the horizon.

It was the dawn of day, the last hour fixed by Noungal.

Eusebius felt a cold shudder pass through his frame, and his hair stood erect.

A few minutes before, he had called upon death to deliver him, and, awe-stricken and appalled, he awaited its approach. The moment the immensity of the unknown world opened at his feet, he hesitated, and recoiled with fear.

His eyes remained fixed upon the east, where little by little the sun cleared itself from the vapours which surrounded it, and the luminous arch extended every moment. It seemed to him that the sun, which was to give the signal for his death, arose with amazing rapidity, and yet each minute seemed to endure a century.

He hid his face in his hands and wept.

His tears refreshed him, and gave him the resignation in which he was deficient.

He thought of what would happen if he failed in the engagement he had taken; he saw the hand of Noungal extended towards him, and separating his remains from Esther's. The thought that his body, and perhaps that also of his wife, would be polluted by the contact of this demon, filled him with horror. He hesitated no longer to pay his debt instantly with suicide.

He seized the knife Noungal had thrown to him when he was in the grove of citron-trees, laid bare his bosom, and pressed the sharp point on his flesh; he lay down by the side of Esther, with his face turned towards hers, in order that he might exhaust his last breath in a blessing upon one he had loved so much. He raised his heart to Heaven, and implored forgiveness for the crime he was

about to commit, and prayed that the surrender of his body to one of the infernal spirits might redeem his soul; and he waited, praying that the star might send its first ray of light into the mountain, as a signal for him to plunge the dagger into his bosom.

The whole heavens soon became purpled, and the face of Esther seemed to reflect its brightness.

Eusebius clutched the weapon in his nervous grasp, and approached his mouth to the lips of the dead.

But all at once, seized with a sudden emotion, the dagger fell from his hand, and he arose trembling, dumb, his face agitated by a horrible agony.

He fancied that he had felt the body of Esther shudder beneath his embrace, and the cold blue lips return the pressure of his own.

Eusebius forgot all that had agonized his mind a few minutes before,—his oath, Noungal, and death,—all the energies of his brain were concentrated on Esther.

A faint colour, however, tinged her cheeks, her lips became red with returning life, and her long brown eyelashes trembled on her milk-white cheeks.

Eusebius, pale and breathless, fell upon his knees.

"Esther! Esther!" he exclaimed.

At the sound of his voice, the eyes of Esther, which Eusebius had thought were for ever closed, slowly opened, and she gazed on her husband with an expression fraught with tenderness and love.

"Alive! alive!" exclaimed Eusebius, almost wild.

The only answer Esther gave was to open her arms and extend them towards her husband.

"But the poison, the poison?" exclaimed the young man, as if the embrace his wife had just returned had not sufficed to convince him that it was not a dead body he had pressed to his heart.

"The poison," replied Esther; "it seems that the Gueber had more faith in your heart than I had myself, and that he only gave me an opiate. We must not forget the

gratitude we owe him ; for life is full of pleasantness and peace when the sun shines upon nature, and the heart we love is reconquered."

Eusebius turned suddenly round and gazed on the horizon.

The star had already ascended far above the mountains, its rays penetrated into the darkest windings of the valley; and then, for the second time, he threw himself into Esther's arms.

* * * * * *

EPILOGUE.

Two months afterwards Eusebius Van den Beck and his wife embarked to return to Europe.

They might have kept that part of the inheritance of Dr. Basilius which neither Arroa nor Noungal had presented themselves to claim ; the notary, M. Maës, advised them strongly to do so ; but, notwithstanding the advice of this excellent man, they distributed all that remained of the doctor's immense property among the hospitals of Batavia, and left the island as poor as when they had arrived.

No accident, however, occurred on their voyage back to Holland, and the vessel that carried them disembarked them safely on the quay at Rotterdam, where they are at present residing, the model of a husband and wife.

Before leaving Java, Eusebius had Hurruck sought for everywhere, as he wished to leave him some token of his gratitude ; but all efforts to discover him proved fruitless. Nothing more was heard of the Gueber ; however, some hunters affirm having seen in the forests, in the centre of the island, a swarthy man, who appeared to have chosen for his companions the most ferocious inhabitants of the forest, among whom he lived as proud and calm as if he had been in the midst of his fellow-creatures.

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Stirling, January 1894

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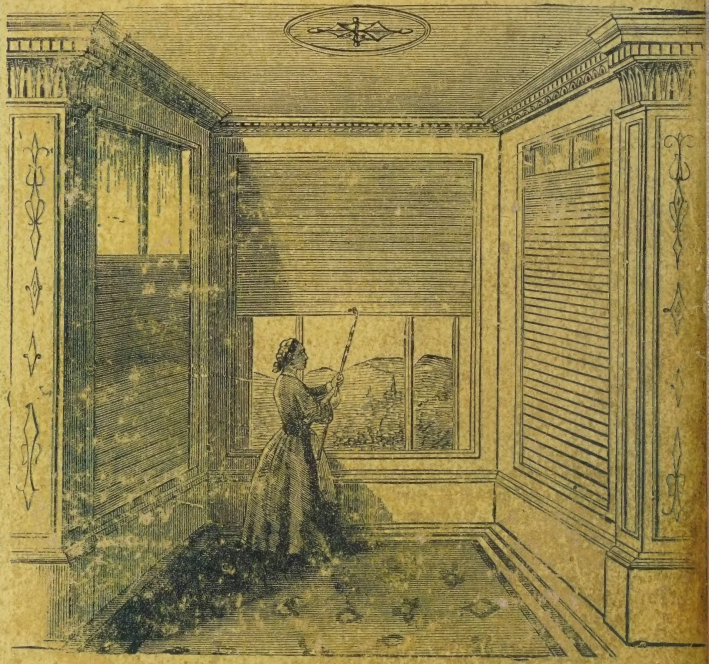

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